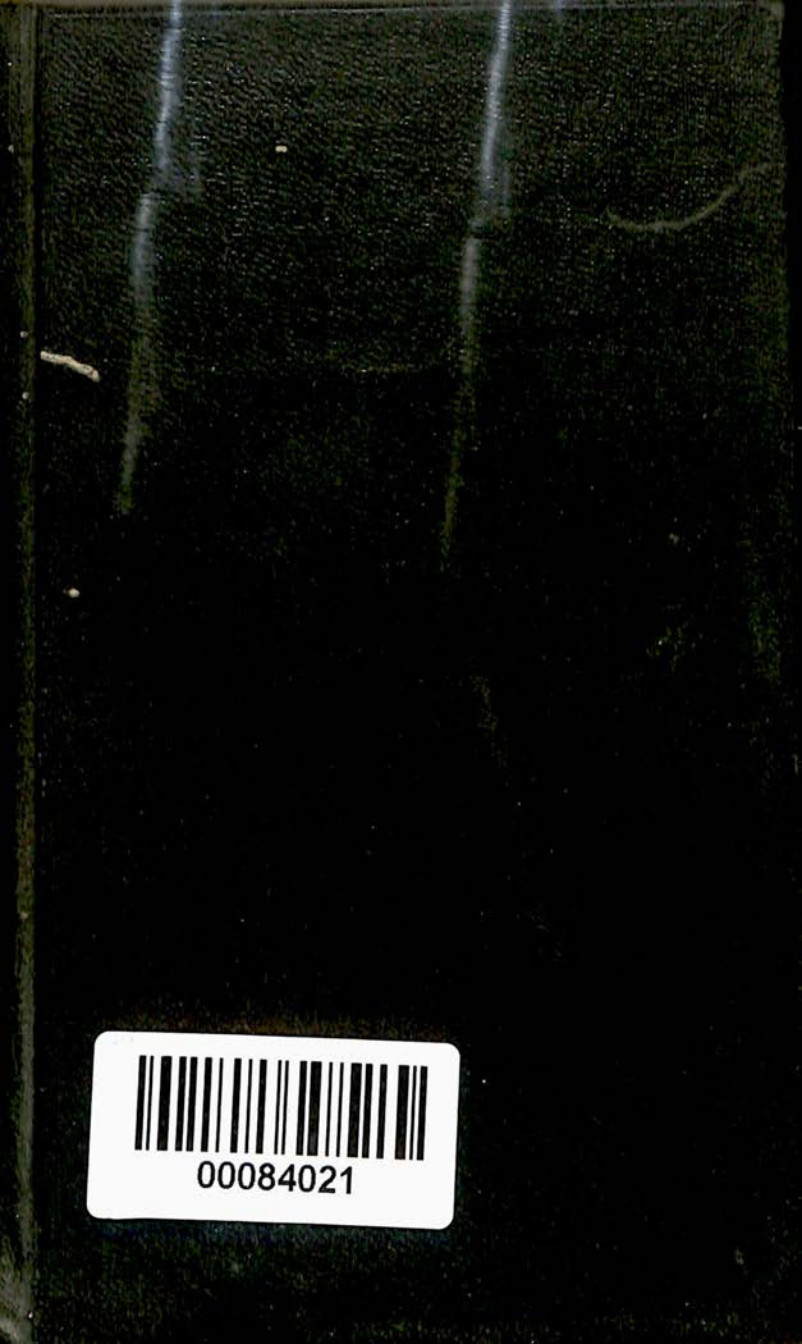
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ROME,

IN THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY.

ROME,

IN THE

NINETEENTH CENTURY;

CONTAINING

A COMPLETE ACCOUNT

OF THE RUINS OF THE ANCIENT CITY,

THE REMAINS OF THE MIDDLE AGES, AND THE

MONUMENTS OF MODERN TIMES.

WITH

REMARKS

ON THE FINE ARTS, ON THE STATE OF SOCIETY,

AND ON THE RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES, MANNERS, AND CUSTOMS,

OF THE MODERN ROMANS.

IN A

SERIES OF LETTERS

WRITTEN DURING A RESIDENCE AT ROME,

IN THE YEARS 1817 AND 1818.

"'Tis Rome demands our tears,
The Mistress of the World, the seat of empire,
The nurse of heroes, the delight of gods,—
That humbled the proud tyrants of the earth,
And set the nations free,—Rome is no more!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ERRATA.

The Reader is respectfully requested to correct the few following Errata, which are indispensible to the sense or grammar:

Page 7, note at bottom, last word, *for* "Letter," *read* Letter XXI.
41, line 2, note, *for* "constituenda," *read* constituendæ.
48, 1, note, *for* "columbarum," *read* columnarum.
77, 2, note, *for* "Balneæ," *read* Balnea.
85, 15, *for* "ambulæra," *read* ambulacra.
115, 11, *for* "sacrificed," *read* sanctified.
142, 8 from bottom, *for* "Virgina," *read* Virginia.
—, 4 from bottom, *for* "Treri," *read* Trevi.
—, 2 from bottom, *for* "Virgina," *read* Virginia.
143, 8 from bottom, *for* "de," *read* di.
—, 2 from bottom, *for* "Antonianæ," *read* Antoniana.
313, 15, *for* "Ghigi, *read* Chigi.
328, 2, note, *for* "venti quattro one," *read* venti quattro, or.
329, 9 from the bottom, *for* "as there is," *read* at.
390, 4, omit "being."

ROME.

LETTER XXIV.

ANCIENT TEMPLES.—TEMPLE OF PIETY—ROMAN DAUGHTER—TEMPLE OF BELLONA—AND TEMPLE OF MARS—PAGAN PRIESTS, RITES, &c.

I THOUGHT I had done with temples, but there is one, though only a name, that I cannot pass over wholly unnoticed. It is the Temple of Piety, erected by command of the Roman Senate, in honour of the daughter who saved the life of her father when condemned to perish from hunger, by nursing him from her bosom.

It was in the prisons of the Decemviri, in the ancient Forum Olitorium, that this beautiful and affecting trait of filial piety happened. The commemorative Temple, sacred to Filial Piety, was raised upon that spot, and upon its site the Church of S. Nicola in Carcere is said to be built. In that Church you are made to look down, through an

aperture in the pavement at one end of it, into a dungeon, in which you indistinctly descry, by the light of torches, three different columns, in three different places, which, you are told, are remains of three different temples, that all stood on this spot (in the breadth of the church.) Two of these columns are Ionic, and one Doric; all are of stone. Of course they shew you which column was the Temple of Piety; but if you ask how they knew it, they will marvel much at your inquisitiveness.

I could have wished to have lent myself to the delusion; to have believed that I stood upon the spot, and saw the vestiges of the building consecrated to Filial Piety; but it would not do. Pliny,* who relates the story, also mentions, that the temple was destroyed to make way for the Theatre of Marcellus; therefore, it is impossible that any trace can now remain of what was removed before his time.

According to Pliny's narration, it was an aged woman whose life was sustained by the piety of her child; and thus the maternal bosom, which had reared her in infancy, drew its nourishment from hers in the close of life. The daughter was the nurse of the mother.

Yet both in popular tradition and in painting, the Carità Romana is always represented to have been a father nursed by his child; but probably she has been confounded by common fame with the Grecian Daughter, who by a similar act saved her father's life.

* Plin. Nat. Hist, l. vii. c. 36.

In the Forum Olitorium, besides this Temple of Piety, there was a Temple to Janus, originally built by Caius Duillius, the first Roman who ever obtained a naval triumph, and rebuilt by Tiberius;* —a Temple to Juno Sospita,† and a great many more.

But these have all disappeared; and to go through the long catalogue of vanished temples that once adorned Rome, would indeed be an endless and unprofitable task. There are perhaps a few, so memorable from their fame in history, that their very sites are worth pointing out, although not a stone of them remains. Of these the most remarkable is the Temple of Bellona in the Circus Flaminius, which stood anciently without the Flaminian gate, although its site is now covered with the most populous part of Modern Rome. Here the Senate convened to meet the victorious consuls who demanded the honour of a triumph, and decide upon their claims. Here foreign ambassadors were received from states at war with the Romans;‡ and from the Columna Bellica in front of this temple, the consul threw the arrow of war towards that country against which hostilities were proclaimed.

The priests of Bellona, like the modern frantic Dervishes of the East, threw themselves into all sorts of contortions, cutting themselves with knives,

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* Tacitus, Ann. lib. ii.

† Livy, Dec. iii. lib. xxxiv. c. 52.

‡ A Temple of Apollo without the city was also occasionally used for this purpose.

howling, foaming at the mouth, and falling into fits of frenzy. They were called Fanatici; * and the broken words they uttered in their transports passed for oracles of the Goddess.

Talking of oracles, which we were doing not long ago with one of the most celebrated Roman antiquaries of the day, I was surprised to find, that he treated with most unmeasured scorn, the belief that there ever were any oracles at Rome or the neighbourhood, or indeed in any part of Italy; and asserted that they were exclusively confined to Greece. I should never have doubted his doctrine, had I not happened to remember that Suetonius, (which I had just been reading,) mentions the circumstance of Domitian's consulting the Oracle of Fortune at Prænestе; and that the same author relates, that Tiberius attempted to suppress all the oracles in the neighbourhood of the city, but was terrified from his purpose by the manifestations of divine displeasure in the Oracles of Prænestе. I might have remembered, too, that the Vatican was the seat of an oracle,† and that in many of the poets there are a thousand other proofs of oracles besides; but these

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* The priests of Baal seem to have resembled these ancient and modern fanatics of the Western and Eastern world,—the priests of Bellona, and the Dervishes; for we are told in the Bible, "they leaped upon the altar and cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." It is curious to remark the same tricks and cheats, in countries, ages, and religions, so widely different.

† Gell. xvi. 17.

are sufficient, and abundantly prove that my friend the antiquary was no great oracle himself.

As the Temple of Bellona stood without the northern gate, the Porta Flaminius; that of Mars was without the southern gate of the city, the Porta Capena.* Thus Rome, on either approach, was guarded by the masculine or feminine deity of war; and the ambassador of the state which might meditate, or the enemy which might advance to commit hostilities, was taught to dread the vengeance of the martial gods, and the martial people they protected.

A procession of the Roman Knights on horseback annually took place, from this Temple to the Capitol, on the 15th of July, in honour of Castor and Pollux, who fought for the Romans on that day at the battle of Lake Regillus.

The priests of Mars were scarcely more tranquil than those of Bellona. They were named Salii,

* There is a tradition, that the little Church of Domine quo Vadis, sometimes called Santa Maria della Palme, stands on the site of the Temple of Mars, (extra muros,) and received that name from a grove of palm-trees which are supposed to have surrounded it. But it is in memory of the Christian, not the Pagan palms, that the title was given. An inscription found in the Vigna Nari, (and reported by Venuti,) seems to prove that the temple stood there. It is thought to have been exactly a mile from the ancient Porta Capena, (which was between the little Churches of S. Nereo and S. Cesareo,) because the first mile-stone on the Via Appia, marked No. 1, now on the balustrade of the Piazza of the Capitol, was found in the same vineyard. I should have looked for that temple nearer to Rome.

from their dancing or leaping; and on the 1st of March used to go through the streets of Rome in a sort of Pyrrhic dance, bearing the Ancilia, or twelve sacred shields, one of which belonged to the god, and fell from heaven,* and the rest were made in imitation of it, lest so invaluable a treasure should be stolen.

The rites of religion among the ancients, it must be owned, were sufficiently obstreperous; whether we look to these already named, to the licentious orgies of Bacchus, the wild feats of the Lupercalia, or the horrible din with which, at the festivals of Cybele, the Corybantes renewed and commemorated that sacred uproar that saved the infant Jupiter from being devoured by his father,† we shall find that noise constituted their essence.

It would be well if this were all. Paganism has been called a mild and cheerful, if not a pure and moral faith; yet were its rites stained with blood, and not the blood of animals only, but of men. To Mania, the mother of the Lares,‡ boys were annually offered up; and though this horrible rite was

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* Plutarch's Life of Numa Pompilius.

† I need hardly observe, that, like most of the Pagan fictions, this is allegorical; that Saturn devouring his children only typifies time swallowing up years.

‡ The Lares and the Penates are often confounded together as the same household gods, though essentially different. The latter were of divine, the former of human origin. The latter were worshipped in the most retired and innermost parts of the house; the former, which were the spirits of

abolished by Junius Brutus, it would appear, that human victims were habitually sacrificed, even at a far later period,* as we have seen they occasionally were.†

Christianity is the only religion (for Mohametism is but a plagiarism from it) that is, or ever has been, free from this foul stain, and that does not enforce the crime of murder as a religious duty; a proof in itself sufficient of its divine origin, and not less strong, than that it is the only religion that announces one God.

It may afford a useful lesson to the proud presumption of human reason, to see man, whether left to the untutored dictates of his own mind, or enlightened by the most refined philosophy, alike seeking to win the favour of the gods, or avert their vengeance, by spilling the blood of his fellow-creatures. When we behold religious murders extending through times and nations the most remote,—from the philosophic Romans to the hostile Carthaginians, the British Druids and the Eastern idolaters; to the timid Hindoos, the savage American Indians, the brutal Africans, and the social South Sea Islanders,—we may indeed bless that divine faith, which not only opened to men the gates

---

their ancestors, were set out in public view, and guarded the domestic hearth.

There were public Penates and public Lares, to which little Temples, or Edicolæ, were erected by the way sides, and worshipped by the passing traveller.

* Macrobius, Sat. i. 7. † Vide Letter.

of heaven, but would, if its divine precepts were followed, make a heaven of earth.

Human sacrifices to the gods were not of long continuance, nor of frequent occurrence at Rome; but even during her brightest days they were incessantly offered up to men. I need not resort to the bloody annals of empire; the carnage of Marius and of Sylla, and even of the hypocritically humane Augustus, are dreadful and incontestible proofs, that while one or two victims could propitiate the wrath of offended deities, thousands were insufficient to appease the demons of hatred and revenge.

Even the sacred fanes of religion, and the holy altars of the gods, were the scene, and sometimes the pretext, of the wrath and cruelty of man. It was in the Temple of Bellona that Sylla assembled the Senate, and coolly harangued them, while the dying cries of six thousand of his unfortunate victims, slaughtered by his command in the adjoining Circus Flaminius, rang in their ears. As if this were not sufficient to glut his vengeance, this monster massacred twelve thousand more at Prænestе.* It was before the Altar of Julius Cæsar, on the ides of March, that Augustus caused three hundred,† or, according to other accounts, four hundred‡ Roman Senators and Knights to be slain. Yet even this atrocious deed did not stain his memory with more infamy than the treacherous and inhuman murder of one,—the best and greatest of the Ro-

* Plutarch—Life of Sylla. † Suetonius, in Vita.
‡ Dion.

mans,—the glory of that, and the light of every succeeding age; the source of his own power, the dupe of his false professions, and the victim of his base ingratitude.

I know not how the memory of that man has escaped execration, who murdered Cicero to propitiate Antony.

LETTER XXV.

THE CIRCUS, AND CIRCUS GAMES.

THE most ancient, and indeed the only sports that were legalized in Rome during the period of the republic, were the Circus Games, which are by some supposed to be of Etruscan, by others of Greek origin. But the Greeks had no Circuses. The Hippodromus, in which their chariot races were run at the Olympic Games, differed from the Circus both in form and plan,* and approached more to the nature of a race course. The Stadium, which was used for foot races, wrestling, and other athletic sports, was never the scene of chariot races, had no spina, and was oval at both ends, whereas the Circus of the Romans was divided longitudinally by the spina, and was square at the end from which the cars started, and oval at the other.

Though Romulus gave the games in honour of Neptune, which the Sabines attended, on the site of what was afterwards the Circus Maximus, the

* Vide the description in Pausanias.

building itself was not erected till the reign of Tarquinius Priscus. During the progress of the republic, it was rebuilt, and frequently enlarged, and always merited its name, for it always continued to be greatest.

In the time of Julius Cæsar, it was capable of containing 150,000 spectators;* in the time of Trajan, (according to Pliny) it held 250,000; and after it was enlarged by Constantine the Great, it is reported, by Valentinian, to have been filled by 360,000.†

During the reigns of the kings, the Circus Maximus was the only Circus in Rome; but in republican times, there were several.

The Circus Flaminius was built by the Consul of that name, who fell in the disastrous battle of Thrasymenus. It stood in the Campus Martius, and without the ancient Flaminian Gate. Not a vestige of it remains; but its site is marked by the Palazze Mattei, and the surrounding streets.

Plays and dramatic entertainments were represented in this Circus,‡ on the dedication of the Temples of Juno and Diana, an amusement for which such a building seems to be but ill calculated.

It is said, that in the court of the Convent of San Nicola Cesarini, are still some remains of a

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* Dion. Hal.

† It seems to have been enlarged by adding additional rows of seats in its height or depth, so that the figure was not changed.

‡ Livy, Dec. 4, lib. xl. c. 51.

small temple, one of the many which stood in this Circus; but the monks, of course, will not admit females, so that I have never seen it; and, by all accounts, the loss is not very great.

The site of the Circus Agonalis is now believed to be occupied by the Piazza Navona, which still preserves its ancient form. The Agonal Games, which were celebrated here, were unquestionably of high antiquity, and are even said to have been instituted by Numa Pompilius. The date of the erection of this Circus is obscure, but it must have been ancient, for we find it mentioned by Livy* at an early period of the republic.

The Circus of Flora was situated between the Esquiline and Viminal Hills; and it has been said, upon supposition, to have stood where the Piazza Barberini now is; but its exact site is unknown.

The Floralia, or Games of Flora, were exhibited in it every spring, originally on the last days of April, and afterwards on the 1st of May. The festival, still observed on that day among the common people of Rome, in the fields and turfy banks, "pranked with early flowers," in the neighbourhood of the city, and particularly at the Grotto of the Nymph Egeria, as well as the English custom of dancing round the May-pole, and even the sports practised later in the month, at the Christian feast of Whitsuntide, all seem to be vestiges of the games of Flora. The licentiousness of those amusements,

* Livy, lib. xxx. c. 38, who mentions that the Circus Agonalis was inundated by the Tiber.

indeed, are now abolished. Maidens still run races for ribands or smocks; but naked females no longer run courses before assembled thousands, as in the *virtuous* days of the Roman republic.

We learn indeed that these, and many other of the gross and infamous exhibitions practised at these games, were suppressed, from respect to the virtue of Cato the Censor, who was once present at them,* and it is said they were never afterwards revived. Rope-dancing was also a common amusement; and it appears that one species of it was introduced at these shows, of which we have no remains,—that of elephants dancing on ropes.†

The Circus of Sallust was built in the age of Augustus; the Circus of Nero, begun by Caligula, and finished by Nero, was built on the ground now occupied by the Sacristy and Church of St Peter. It was originally intended as a private theatre, where he might amuse himself in running chariot races with his favourites, but he soon invited the populace to witness his dexterity, and became a common competitor for the prizes.‡ After the conflagration of Rome, he found a new amusement in torturing the Christians to death in this Circus, and in the gardens which surrounded it,

* Plutarch's Life of Cato. Sen. Ep. 37.

† It was "a new kind of spectacle" brought into fashion by Galba. Suet. in Vit. Galba.

‡ Tacitus, Ann. 14.

under the pretence that they were the incendiaries —"nailing them alive to crosses, exposing them to be devoured by furious dogs, or wrapped in combustible garments, and set on fire like torches, to illuminate the night."*

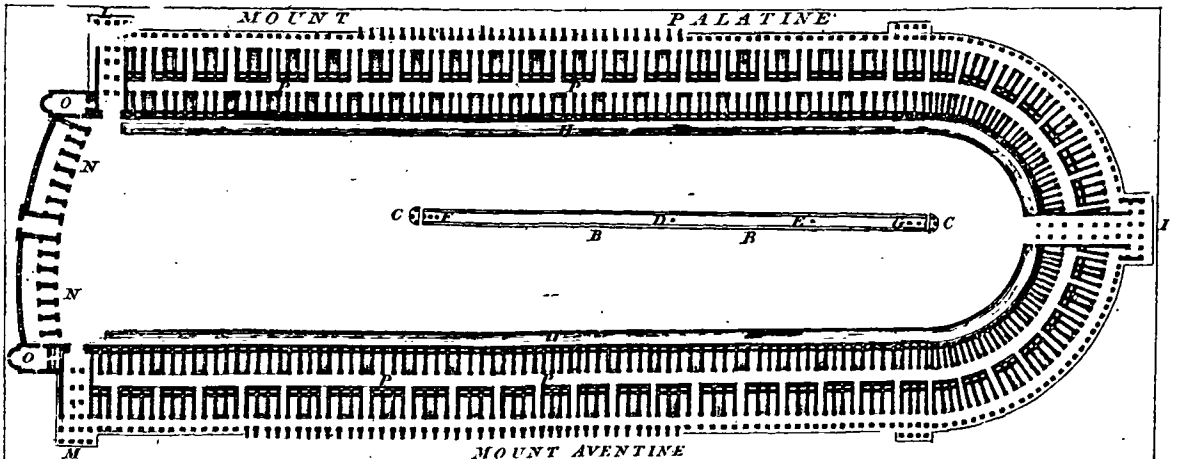
The Circus of Hadrian was behind his Mausoleum, and the Circus of Heliogabalus was near the Church of Santa Croce, in Gierusalemme.

But all these remain only in name. Not one stone stands upon another. Paul III. that universal destroyer of antiquities, removed the last remains of the Circus Maximus, a building which had stood through the Regal, the Republican, the Imperial, and the Gothic governments of Rome, and was finally demolished only in the Papal. Notwithstanding its destruction, however, the form and parts of the Circus Maximus (as well as of every other ancient Circus) are so accurately preserved in bas reliefs, medals, &c. and so fully verified by the nearly perfect remains of one upon the Via Appia, that I have no hesitation in sending you a complete plan of it, drawn by one of the Roman antiquaries, which, with the exception of the Euripus, or Canal, may serve as a tolerably correct representation of every ancient Circus, since they differed only in magnitude, not in plan.

As the Games of the Circus were sacred to the gods; altars, and temples of various deities were erected in, and around every Circus; and mention

* Tacitus, Ann. 14.

PLAN OF THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS.



PLAN OF THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS.

A A *Arena.*	D. *Egyptian Obelisk.*	H. *The Euripus or*	I. *Triumphal Gate*	O.O. *Towers.*
B B *Spina.*	E. *D°* *D°*	H *Canal, made by*	L. *Gate of Entrance*	P P. *Substructions*
C.C. *First & Second*	F. *The Seven Dolphins*	*Julius Cæsar for*	M. *D°* *D°*	P P *of the Gradus*
Meta.	G. *The Seven Eggs.*	*naval Games.*	N N *Carceres or Car-houses*	*or Seats.*

W. H. Lizars Sculp.

Edinburgh Published by A. Constable & C.° 1820.

of a remarkable number of these in the Circus Maximus, is incidentally made by the Roman historians.

A temple was erected here to Venus, by the fines imposed on the Roman ladies who were convicted of adultery;* and certainly the source of the fund for building it gives one no very exalted idea of the virtue of the Roman matrons, even in republican times. Besides this temple, those of Bacchus, Ceres, and Proserpine,† of Flora,‡ of Hercules, and many more; together with the great statue of Apollo brought from Carthage,‖ stood near the Circus. The Sacellum of the Sun, the Altar of Youth, and the images, altars, and sacella of a variety of deities, were erected on the Spina, (see the plan, BB.) or long narrow ridge round which the cars ran, and which divided the arena of the Circus in its breadth into two parts. It was crowned with two Egyptian obelisks, (D. E.) the first of which was placed there by Augustus, the last by Constans II.

At one of the two Metæ, (C. C.) which stood isolated at the extremities of the Spina, was the buried altar of Consus; a deity, who, according to some accounts, was the equestrian Neptune, in whose honour the games were given; and, to others, the God of Counsels, who inspired Romulus with the project of carrying off the Sabine women at their

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* Livy, Dec. 1. lib. 10. c. 31.
† Tacitus, Ann.
‡ Livy, Dec. 3. lib. xxxvi. c. 36.
‖ Plutarch's Life of Flaminius.

first celebration, and whose altar stood in a dark spot, covered up with earth, and was only uncovered when the preparatory sacrifices were to be offered, in token that the counsels should be secret and hidden. This altar was in every Circus. At the other Meta, in the Circus Maximus, stood the Altar of Murcia, the Goddess of Sloth; and probably this deity gave to this valley the name of Val Myrtia, which it bears to this day, although other accounts say that it derived it from a myrtle tree sacred to Venus. The site and environs of the Circus Maximus are still called Circhi by the people of Rome.

If it was the first place where games were celebrated in Rome, it was also the last. So late as the close of the fifth century, it was filled, for the last time, with Christian spectators,* who seem slowly and reluctantly to have abandoned these darling pleasures, the inhumanity of which was condemned by the spirit of their faith.

It is a mistake to suppose that the sports of the Circus were confined to chariot races. Horse and foot races, fights of gladiators,† wrestling, (boxing,

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* About the year 495, immediately after which the Circus Games were finally abolished. Baronius Annal. Ecclesias. an authority I have never consulted, is quoted in verification of the fact.

† Combats of gladiators were first exhibited in Rome A.D. 490.—(Vide Val. Max. ii. 4. 7.) They were then, and continued to be long afterwards, exhibited as funeral games only, perhaps to appease the manes of the dead, instead of the original horrible rite of sacrificing human beings.—VIRG. Æn. x. 518.

with the cæstus) leaping, and all sorts of active exercises, were exhibited here. Naval courses and games were celebrated in the close of the republic, in the Euripus, a canal sixteen feet in breadth, with which Julius Cæsar surrounded the Circus Maximus; and thirty-six crocodiles were shown by Augustus to the eyes of the wondering Romans, after his triumphant return from Egypt.* Combats of wild beasts were held in the Circus Maximus before the beginning, and before the end of the Empire; in the days of Julius Cæsar† and Carinus.‡

This last prodigal and luxurious Emperor surpassed, in the pomp and splendour of the games and spectacles he exhibited, all who had gone before him. The care of his predecessor, Probus, had transformed the Circus into an artificial forest, filled with large trees transplanted by the roots; and its shades were successively tenanted by hundreds of the white-plumed ostrich, the stag, the elk, the zebra, the cameleopard, and the majestic elephant; together with the hitherto-unseen forms of the bulky rhinoceros, and the hippopotamus of the Nile The roar of Indian tigers and African hyenas resounded through the glade; the spotted leopard roamed at large; and hundreds of Numidian lions, transported from their burning deserts, and bears brought from their polar snows, were assembled and slaughtered‖ in this ample arena.

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* Dion. Cassius, p. 781.

† Suetonius in Vita.

‡ Decline and Fall, vol. ii. pp. 83, 84, 85.

‖ Decline and Fall, vol. ii. pp. 84, 85.

In the long intervening period of the Empire that had elapsed between Cæsar and Carinus, the combats of gladiators and wild beasts had generally been given in the amphitheatre ;* and chariot races, the proper Circus games, alone exhibited here.

These sacred games in honour of the gods were annually given in the month of August,† under the direction, and generally at the expense of the Ædiles, who frequently ruined themselves with the magnificence of these shows. Cæsar was obliged to sell his Tiburtine Villa to assist in defraying the enormous expense of the games he gave during his Ædileship ; and when he set off on the expedition into Spain, he was, by an enormous sum, worse than nothing.‡ Yet all the cost he lavished upon them scarcely compensated for the umbrage he gave to the people by employing himself in writing in his tablets during their representation.‖

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* The well-known and affecting incident of Androcles and the Lion, is, however, said to have taken place in the Circus Maximus.—Vide Aull. Gell. Noct. Att. 7.

† The Consualia, or games sacred to Consus, the god whose hidden altar was in every circus, took place in August. But the Ludi Magni, sacred to the great gods, were celebrated in September. The Secular games were given only once in a century, and not regularly even then. They were for the safety of the Empire, and were in honour of Apollo and Diana.

‡ Plutarch's Life of Julius Cæsar. And yet, during his first consulship, he had stolen 3000lb. weight of gold out of the Capitol, and replaced it with the same quantity of gilt brass.—Suetonius in Vita.

‖ Suetonius in Vita.

Cæsar well understood the value of time, but here forgot that policy demanded its sacrifice. At a very different period, when, after crossing the Rubicon, he entered by force the city which he had entered five times in triumph, he exhibited games, which might be called the funeral games of the liberties of Rome—the splendour of which, and the ardour of the people to see them, were so great, that a crowd of plebeians, and two senators, were killed in the press. At that time two senators publicly exhibited themselves as gladiators;* and, in more degenerate times, even women of rank fought like common gladiators in the amphitheatre.†

Previous to the games, the grand procession of the images of the gods, drawn in the Thensa, or sacred car, took place; and in later times, the statues of the Emperors were borne along with them. The cavalcade of the chariots and horses destined for the sports, formed the Pompa Circensis, sacred to Apollo.

The signal for commencing the games was given by the Emperor. It is related that once, when the people were extremely clamorous from the delay, Nero, who was at table, hastily threw his napkin out of the balcony of the Imperial Palace, into the Circus below, and that it afterwards became the established signal; *mittere mappam* was the word. It strikes me, however, that the allusions to this signal and phrase occur in the classics at an earlier period than Nero's reign.

The cars were drawn up ready to start in front

* Tacitus Ann. xv. 32. † Suetonius in Vita.

of the Carceres, or car-houses (N.N.) confined in the same line by a rope held by two statues of Mercury, (probably Termini) which was withdrawn on the signal being given.* A furrow filled with white chalk, called *alba linea*, was the line of victory—the last line. Horace makes a beautiful allusion to this, when he says, "Mors *ultima linea* rerum est."

The Aurigæ, or charioteers, were divided into four permanent and contending factions, the distinguishing colours of which were, white, red, blue, and green.

These colours are supposed to have borne some mystic reference to the elements—that white distinguished the air; red, fire; green, the earth; and blue, the ocean. They have also been said to represent the four seasons of the year; and spring, summer, and winter, may indeed be supposed to be green, red, and white; but why should autumn be blue?

The supporters of these different colours were called Partizans—and deserved the name, for they adhered in their attachment to the colours, regardless of the merits of the horses, charioteers, &c., and were exhilarated or depressed as their colour triumphed or was defeated. History bears mourn-

* It is curious that the same custom prevails in Italy to this day. At the Carnival races in the Corso, the horses, each held back by several men, are ranged behind a cord drawn across the street, which is loosened at the signal for starting, and the poor animals, maddened by the spikes of steel, and the burning gun-powder beating on their backs, rush on with a madness that is called spirit.

ful testimony to the deadly feuds waged between the green and blue factions at Constantinople, in the latter days of the Empire.* This permanent attachment to particular colours, however, did not prevent betting from going on both in the Circus and Amphitheatre.† Four chariots, one of every colour, started in each course, which consisted of seven circuits round the Spina. These circuits were marked by the removal of one of the seven eggs (G.) and seven dolphins (F.) from the two extremities of the Spina. The dolphins, it is supposed, were used as marks in honour of Neptune, the patron god of the games; and the eggs in honour of Castor and Pollux, who, as every one knows, were hatched like chickens, and were the equestrian gods.

The victor of each course, (missus) or, as we should call it, of each heat, placed his car in the Carceres, or car-houses, (N.) which were thirteen in number, twelve double, capable of containing two cars, and one single. For as a hundred cars generally ran in a day, there were, consequently, twenty-five victorious, which started together for the last grand course; after which, the victor of victors, crowned, issued out of the Triumphal Arch, (I.) at the oval end of the Circus, bearing his palm of victory in his hand, and followed by the acclamations of the multitude.

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* Procopius De Bell. Got. states, that upwards of 30,000 were murdered in these affrays.

† Suetonius in Vita Dom. Plin. Ep. ix.

The Spina (vide Plan, B.B.) was always nearer to the oval, and farther from the square end of the Circus, in order to give room for the cars to start.

Sometimes Bigas, or cars with two horses, but more frequently Quadrijugi, or cars with four, contended in the Circus games. Sometimes, but rarely, cars with six horses, or Sejugi, ran; and I remember seeing a gem, on which cars were represented with ten horses abreast.

In the Vatican are preserved a beautiful marble Biga, or car drawn by two horses, and the statue of an Auriga, or charioteer, whose hand bears the palm of victory. The costume is peculiarly elegant; his tunic, or robe, is bound with a zone formed of a great number of small cordons. The bas reliefs, preserved in the same chamber of the Vatican, and also at the Villa Albani,* give a very lively representation of the Circus races. You see the Carceres, the Spina, the Metæ, the eggs, and the dolphins—little fluttering loves sitting on the horses, and impelling their ardent speed, or overthrown with their cars upon the ground, and crushed beneath their whirling wheels. Such accidents unfortunately continually occurred, though men, not cherubs, were the victims. At every exhibition of Circus games, the dead and the dying were carried out amidst the shouts and exultation of the victors. Thus the same character of cruelty seemed to pervade every amusement of the ancient

* In the frieze of the oval vestibule at the head of the stairs, and also in some detached bassi relievi.

Romans; and modern nations, humanized by a purer faith, may retaliate the epithet of barbarians, on the masters of the world. It was astonishing the fondness of the people for these games. "Panem et Circensis,"* was the popular cry; and they were content under the enormities of any tyrant who bestowed upon them abundance of these.

If the Parisians are like the ancient Romans in nothing else, they certainly resemble them in this passion for "pain et plaisir."

One only of all the Circuses of Ancient Rome remains, but it is in better preservation, I believe, than any other in the world. It stands on the Via Appia, beside the Tomb of Cecilia Metella, and it is called the Circus of Caracalla, though there is no other reason for believing that Emperor ever built any Circus at all, than that a medal of his reign bears a Circus on its reverse, which may just as probably commemorate a restoration or enlargement of the Circus Maximus, as the erection of a new one. And even granting that he did build a Circus, since the site is unknown, placing it here is purely conjectural. The striking inferiority, too, in its structure — the coarse clumsy bricks, and the wretched style of building—in which bits of stone, tiles, and broken pieces of marble, are coarsely plaistered together to form its walls, present such a contrast to the noble Thermæ of Caracalla, that we can scarcely consider it a work of the same date.

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* ——— atque duas tantum res anxius optat
Panem et Circensis.—*Juvenal*, lib. x. Sat. 80.

It has been called, and upon as slender grounds, the Circus of Gallienus; and the meanness of the structure at least, is more consonant to the degeneracy of the arts at that period.

But however unsupported by probability or evidence, it has now a prescriptive right to the name of the Circus of Caracalla; and the Circus of Caracalla it must therefore be called.

The walls of this Circus have scarcely even been partially destroyed, and their circuit is still entire. Whether its ancient pavement, or any remains of it, are still to be found, I know not, for its marshy arena is now covered with grass of emerald verdure; and when we last visited it, a flock of sheep were peacefully grazing in it.

The Spina, though grass-grown, still remains. We observed that, besides being nearer to the oval end, in order to allow room for the cars to start from the square end; it is also nearer the left than the right side, by about thirty feet, I should suppose; the reason of which may probably be, that some of the cars would be left behind in rounding the further Meta, and consequently less space be necessary on the further side.

Beneath the extremity of the Spina, nearest the square end, there is a small subterranean cavity, which has evidently been the altar-place of Consus. The obelisk now in the Piazza Navona, once adorned the Spina of this Circus. The Metæ, which were about twelve feet distant from the ends of the Spina, have disappeared; and, indeed, they seem to have been formed of perishable materials, those in the Circus Maximus, which were gilt by the Emperor

Claudius, being of wood.* From the Meta preserved at the Villa Albani, each Meta seems to have been composed of three cones, or pyramids.

The triumphal gate through which the victor of victors issued at the oval end of the Circus, is still entire; but there are no remains of the Carceres, or division for the cars, at the opposite extremity.

These Carceres, which extended along the whole breadth of the Circus, according to the modern books and plans,† and explanations, and antiquaries, were completely filled with the twenty-five cars of the victors; all of which, they say, started together in little more than one-half of the breadth of the Circus, on one side of the Spina, for the last course. In other words, that they could run in half the space they filled when standing. I could not have believed that even an antiquary could have made such an egregious assertion, if I had not heard it with my own ears in this very Circus.

Independent of this absurd paradox, and in despite of all the antiquaries in the world, I maintain it to be a physical impossibility that twenty-five cars, or even half that number, could have found room to stand, much less to drive abreast on one side of the Spina; nor is there a single person, of plain understanding, to whom I have put the question, from one of the first mathematicians of the age, to Jacob the groom, who has not agreed with me in this opinion.

In the Circus Maximus, indeed, they might

* Suetonius in Vita.

† Panvinius Ludis Circensibus, Bianchini, &c.

have found room for this number to have run together, for any thing I know to the contrary; but in this Circus it is a perfect impossibility.

It is computed that this Circus could contain upwards of 20,000 spectators. There are two towers at the end where the Carceres stood, one of which, it is supposed, was intended for the trumpeters or musicians, and the other for the judges of the race.

A tower on the right side is still standing, and there are some remains of one on the left, not however exactly facing it.

One of these, we may suppose, was intended for the Emperor and his court; and though the seat of these distinguished personages is understood to have been in the Podeum,* where the Vestal Virgins, Senators, and those of consular rank, had also the right of sitting; Cæsar may not have chosen to share the same seat with them, and the tower may have been adopted as the more complete distinction of a later age. The balcony in the Imperial Palace, from which the Emperor viewed the games in the Circus Maximus, is a similar situation.

Right of place in the Circus, indeed, was not conceded to any of the privileged orators till the reign of Claudius, although seats in the orchestra of the Theatre, and the Podeum of the Amphitheatre, had been granted them as early as the sixth century of the republic.†

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* The front row in all Theatres.

† It was in A.U. 558, in the consulate of Cornelius Scipio.

Leaving the Circus, we pass through a door at the end, where the Carceres stood, into a large square, enclosed with high walls, of the same date and construction as the Circus itself, which has evidently been divided into small regular compartments, like stalls of stables, or small coach-houses. In the centre of this place stands a brick building of a better age, which some antiquaries say was a temple, and that they can plainly see where the portico of six columns was attached to the front, and where the steps led up to it, and where the statue stood in it. I have long ago been convinced that I have not antiquarian eyes, and a decisive proof of it is, that I could see none of these things. Other antiquaries again see, with equal clearness, that this was nothing but a Carceres, or car-house, and that the surrounding walls, which the first party call a Temenos, or holy inclosure for their temple, was divided into stalls for horses. To this is rejoined by the believers in the temple, indignant at its degradation, that it is evidently a building of an earlier date than the Circus; and who would build a Carceres at least an hundred years before a Circus? They of the Carceres side, in turn, reply, that it *may* have been a building of more ancient date, not originally designed for the purpose, but it *must* have been converted into a Carceres, for they see the places for the cars; at the same time they positively deny that it ever was a temple.

An acute writer, of our own country, thinks it was a Serapeon, upon the supposition that the Cir-

cus is Caracallas's, and that Serapis was particularly the object of that Emperor's worship. It is certain that the Altar of Serapis, now in the Capitol, with an inscription sacred to this deity, was found near the neighbouring Church of San Sebastiano.

I shall not pretend to give an opinion on the knotty point, of what this building was, or was not; much less repeat more of the multifarious and clashing conjectures that have been made as to its ancient use or purpose. At present, it has been used to support a most wretched sort of Casino, which, like most of those erections near Rome, has dwindled from serving the pleasures of princes, to the abode of Vignaruoli.* Around it, in the adjoining vineyards, are many ruins, whose date and destination are equally involved in obscurity. One of them, without the smallest foundation, has been called at random the vestiges of the famous Temple of Virtue and Honour, built by Marcellus, and restored by Vespasian, although that stood at the ancient Porta Capena,† from which this spot is more than five miles distant.

That there may have been temples in and around this, as well as other Circuses, is indeed highly probable; and many of the mouldering walls we see may be their remains, although we cannot now distinctly trace them. The only building in sufficient preservation to enable us to discover its na-

* Or more properly, *Vignaiuoli,* vine-dressers.

† Plutarch—Life of Marcellus.

ture, is an unknown tomb, one of the many which lined the Appian Way. I believe it was called the tomb of the family of Servilia, until the real remains of that were found, and erected by Canova, a little further upon this road. Its vaulted roof, forming a four-sided quadrangular pyramid, is a very singular piece of architecture. It stands immediately *without* the wall of the stable,—or Temenos of the Temple,—or whatever it may be,—on the side nearest the Circus.

The Circus of Sallust stood near the Porta Collina, and it is well worth while to pay a visit to the deserted spot, once occupied with the luxurious gardens of the historian, in the midst of which it was situated; for its site, its form, and size, are still very apparent; and though not a stone of the building remains, the very ground is not without its interest. On the sloping bank, once lined with marble seats, and filled with crowds of Roman spectators, the leafless vine is straggling amongst briars, and the wild flowers of the field blooming in unrestrained luxuriance.

The pomp of the Secular Games that were celebrated here in honour of Apollo, have been commemorated in the strains of poets, panegyrists, and satirists. Shattered relics of ancient splendour—columns of transparent oriental alabaster and Giallo Antico—pavements of the richest mosaics—and entire porticos of the rarest marbles, have been dug up in immense quantity from beneath the vines and wild weeds, that perhaps still cover even more precious remains.

In the most luxurious era of luxurious Rome, these gardens were noted for their luxury, and were frequently the favourite resort of Nero.*

The Egyptian obelisk, now at the Trinita di Monte, which was found here, could not have been erected by Sallust, because he died before the conquest of Egypt. It must have been placed here by Augustus, or some of the later Cæsars.

The ruins of the House of Sallust still stand by the side of his Circus. You may ascend by a weed-covered staircase to the second storey, where, not many years ago, we were told some few vestiges of ancient painting were to be seen, and where, even when I first visited it, several patches of mosaic flooring still remained. But the last time I was there, every trace of them had disappeared—carried off, as the countryman who shows the place informed us, by the Forestieri.

Nearly adjoining to the ruined habitation of the historian, are the remains of the octagonal brick temple already mentioned, supposed to have been the Temple of Venus Erycina.

It would appear that, although the Circus of Sallust was not built till the reign of Augustus, its site was sometimes used as such, in case of emergency, even in republican times; for we read, that when the Circus Maximus was overflowed by the Tiber, the games were celebrated before the Temple of Venus Erycina.†

The young Vignaruolo shewed us, near this tem-

* Vide Tacitus, Ann. 14. † Livy, lib. 30, c. 28.

ple, which he learnedly denominated the Temple of Vesta,—and the House of Sallust, which he called the House of the Vestal Virgins—a hole through which he declares they put those vestals who had violated their vows of chastity. Now it is true that the Campus Sceleratus, in which these guilty and unfortunate vestals were buried alive, was a little beyond the ancient Porta Collina, and consequently in this vicinity, though its exact site is unknown; but that Vesta ever had a temple, or her vestals a habitation here, is a secret known only to my friend the Vignaruolo.

From hence, extending all along the side of the Circus, are immense walls, strengthened with solid buttresses, built against the Quirinal Hill.

At the corner of this wall stands a Casino, built, I believe, by the Barberini family, but which, apparently, has shared in their fortunes, and no longer serves the purposes of pleasure.

Beneath it, we had heard and read, might still be seen, a few of the stones of the wall of Servius Tullius. How eagerly we looked, you may imagine! We turned the corner of the Casino, and sought along the base of the wall, till at last, near its second angle, we actually found, low down and half hidden with long grass and weeds, a few squares of grey peperin stone.

Our transport you can never conceive. The original walls of Republican Rome! The venerable work of her Kings, that we had searched for so long, and so vainly! Did we see them? nay, more, actually touch them at last! The belief might be

delusive, but that was no matter, it did just as well. Besides, all the old antiquaries, both dead and alive, describe these ancient walls to have passed exactly in this direction, beneath this very Casino, and believe these stones to be their remains,—so why might not we? I never made any question of it, for my part.

In returning, the Vignaruolo, who seemed to take to heart our incredulity about the House of the Vestal Virgins, besought us once more to look at it, and he was sure we would be convinced.

We got him to give us an account of their manner of interment, which nearly convulsed us with laughter. But seriously, the frequency of this dreadful punishment is to me one of the most extraordinary circumstances in the annals of Rome. Was it not wonderful, that the most sacred oaths, the most solemn ties, the feelings of honour, the dread of infamy, and the prospect of the most horrible of deaths, could not restrain six noble ladies from violating the laws of chastity, even for a limited term of years? For at the age of thirty, the duties of their vocation were over, and it was lawful to marry, although it was not accounted honourable or auspicious so to do.

At this day, in our own country, not six virgins, perhaps not one, could be found of similar rank, although under no peculiar obligations, who had committed the crime for which so many Vestals suffered.

Whilst we were listening to their pathetic story, as recounted by the Vignaruolo, some pretty Con-

tadine came up to us, attended by their rustic swains; and after looking into the hole, pitied the Vestal Virgins, (*Poverine!*) shrugged their shoulders, and laughing, thanked their stars and the Madonna, that poor Fanciulle were not buried alive for such things now-a-days.

Their dark eyes sparkled coquettishly, and their long shining black hair, for it was Giorno di Festa, was plaited and coiled round the back of their heads, and fastened with an immense silver bodkin, or rather skewer, richly ornamented with carving, and tipped with a jewel. Their necks were hung round with coral necklaces and gold chains; and the purple sleeves of their vests were tied to their shoulders with large bows of sky-blue ribbon, leaving a vacuum, through which peeped out the full white sleeve of the chêmise. The shoe was decorated with a buckle, which, for size and splendour, might have served our great-great-grandmothers. These pretty peasants lived close by; and indeed it is amusing to see the variety of rustics that live within the walls of Rome, with as little of the air of a city as if they had never approached one. This is the holiday dress of most of the lower orders of females in this immediate neighbourhood, but every little village among the hills has its own distinguishing peculiarity of costume, from which they never deviate.

Setting the dirt apart, the dresses, especially of the mountaineers, are very picturesque; their forms and faces, and the easy unrestrained grace of air

and attitude, often recal to you, that they are born upon a classic soil.

But how have I wandered from the games of the Circus to the dresses of the Italian peasantry! I don't, however, remember, that I have any thing more to say about either. So, farewell for the present.

LETTER XXVI.

ROMAN THEATRES.

I HAVE already observed, that the severity of the Republican law permitted no places of public amusement except Circuses, which were privileged, because the Circus Games were religious ceremonies, given in honour of the gods, and consecrated by the institution of the deified Romulus.

Plays were first introduced into Rome in order to stop a pestilence.* The usual expedient for effecting this, that of creating a Dictator for the purpose of driving a nail into the door of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, had been tried, and proved inefficacious. Nay, the Lectisternium, a public entertainment to a party of the gods, had been given without success. Their statues had lain for eight days in magnificent beds, ranged round a table, upon which a sumptuous banquet was daily served up to them. But they ate it, as Jupiter ate his annual feasts in the Capitol, by proxy; the Epulones, or priests, who had the care of providing it, regularly performing that ceremony. Accord-

* Livy, lib. vii. c. 2. It was in the year of Rome 389.

ing to the best authorities, Latona, with her twin children Apollo and Diana, occupied one bed; Mercury and Hercules another, and Neptune, the third.

Throughout Rome the people feasted in the Convædium in front of their houses, making welcome every guest. The prisons were cleared, the prisoners liberated, and the bitterest enemies met together as friends.*

But all this laying in bed, and feasting, and shaking of hands, had been done in vain. The pestilence still continued unabated; and, therefore, to appease the incensed deities, actors were sent for from Hetruria, who appear to have performed pantomimes rather than plays; for "without reciting any kind of poetry, they danced gracefully, in the Tuscan manner, to the flute."

In the midst of these religious ceremonies, a sudden inundation of the Tiber nearly drowned both actors and spectators, and effectually put a stop to the performances for the time. But henceforward, Satires (Saturæ) a licentious extempore sort of buffoonery borrowed from the Etruscans, seem occasionally to have been represented in Rome; and some years afterwards, "regular plays" were written and performed by Livius Andronicus, who, according to the custom of the age, was at once their author and sole actor, and sung them to the flute. Actors for the several parts of the play, were, however, at last introduced, but singing to the flute

* Livy, lib. vii.

still formed an essential part of dramatic representations.

The Oscan farce, so called from the Osci, a people of Campania, next became popular. In Rome this description of plays was called Atellanæ,* but their performance was confined to the Roman youth, and professed actors were not allowed to degrade them by their representations.†

It therefore appears that plays were originally introduced from Hetruria,‡ and not from Greece, whence the Romans usually derived their arts and improvements. But in later times, the Grecian drama, with its accompaniments of the chorus, the music, the dancers, and masked actors for every separate part, was brought upon the Roman stage; with this difference, that in the Theatres of Greece, the scene, which was narrow, was occupied only by the actors, while the chorus, &c. filled the orchestra; but in Rome, all the performers, of whatever kind, were upon the stage, which was therefore deeper than in Greece, and the orchestra was only used for the seat of the Consuls and Senators.

The regular Roman comedy, indeed, was confessedly an imitation, or rather a translation from the Grecian; Plautus and Terence owned Menander and Aristophanes for their masters; and al-

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* Probably from Atella, (now Aversa,) a city between Capena and Naples.

† Vide Livy, lib. vii. c. 2. from which this sketch of the Roman stage is principally taken.

‡ The Latin name of an actor, and of the dramatic art,—Hister, Histrionia, were Etruscan words.

though we may not refuse the Umbrian baker, and the Carthaginian slave, the praise of original genius, the inferiority of their works was acknowledged by the Romans themselves.

It is well known, that in Greece dramas were first performed at the feasts of Bacchus, and indeed they always continued to be tinctured with no small share of their primitive licentiousness. In memory of their origin, the ancient statues of the Tragic and Comic Muse, have their brows bound with a garland of vines.* But from whence the Grecians derived the drama, it would be vain to enquire. We can carry the invention no higher, for Egyptian antiquity, I believe, affords no trace of any sort of theatrical representation; and we have but obscure lights as to the Etruscan stage, and may doubt if it ever reached higher than pantomimic entertainments of music and dancing, or improvisatorial recitations, of which the actors were authors.

But dramas, of whatever kind, were in those days exhibited at Rome in places constructed of leafy boughs of trees,† in tents and booths,—or, at best, in temporary or moveable erections; somewhat superior perhaps in dignity to the cart of Thespis, though apparently not much more luxurious in point of accommodation; for in a passage of some classic author which dwells in my memory, though I cannot recal where I met with it, it is mentioned, that these temporary theatres were not allowed to

* For instance, those in the Vatican, and in all ancient bas reliefs and gems.

† Ovid somewhere calls them "Nemorosa Palatia."

be furnished with seats, lest the people should consume too much time in such frivolous diversions.

In spite of the prohibition of permanent theatres, however, which continued in force during the whole period of the Republic, it was during the Republic that Roscius lived and died; and thus, by a strange apparent inconsistency, the theatrical art had reached its highest perfection before there was a theatre.

Livy, indeed, mentions the erection of a theatre for plays in the Capitol, near the Temple of Apollo,* almost two hundred years before the fall of the Republic; but it must have been one of those temporary theatres which were removed after every series of dramatic exhibition was over; though the magnificence of some of these,—during that sudden burst of luxury in which the Republic expired, and the empire received its birth,—far surpassed all the permanent theatres of modern times.

Pliny tells us,† that the theatre of Scaurus, which contained 80,000 spectators, was adorned with three hundred and sixty columns, and three thousand statues of bronze; that the three orders of the stage were composed of marble, of glass, and of gilded tablets, and that every part of it was finished with the same profuse and costly decoration.

He also describes another temporary theatre, which was semi-circular, for plays; but when the performances of the stage ended, it turned round upon an axis with all the spectators in their seats,

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* Livy, Dec. iv. lib. xl. c. 51.—A. C. 174.

† Pliny, Nat. Hist. lib. 36. c. 15.

and, in some manner inconceivable to us, formed an amphitheatre.

But the first theatre that was built of stable materials in Rome, was the Theatre of Pompey,* and yet not even his power and popularity could enable him in this respect to infringe the ancient laws, without incurring severe censure and opposition. He was even obliged, in order to save it from demolition by the Censor, to make a nominal pretence, not intended to impose upon any one, but merely to elude the law, that the theatre was only intended to contain the people who assembled to worship at the Temple of Venus Victorious, (Victrix,) which he purposely erected in it.

We may see in every instance how earnestly Pompey and Cæsar courted popularity, by the care and expense they bestowed to indulge the reigning passion of the many-headed multitude for shews and entertainments of all kinds.

This theatre was dedicated, not by the effusions of the Tragic or Comic Muse, but by the bloody tragedy of the slaughter of five hundred lions, and the farce of a battle of elephants with armed men.† It was built on the improved plan of a theatre which Pompey had seen at Mitylenæ,‡ and stood near his Curia, on the present Campo di Fiore; but there is not a single vestige of it remaining.

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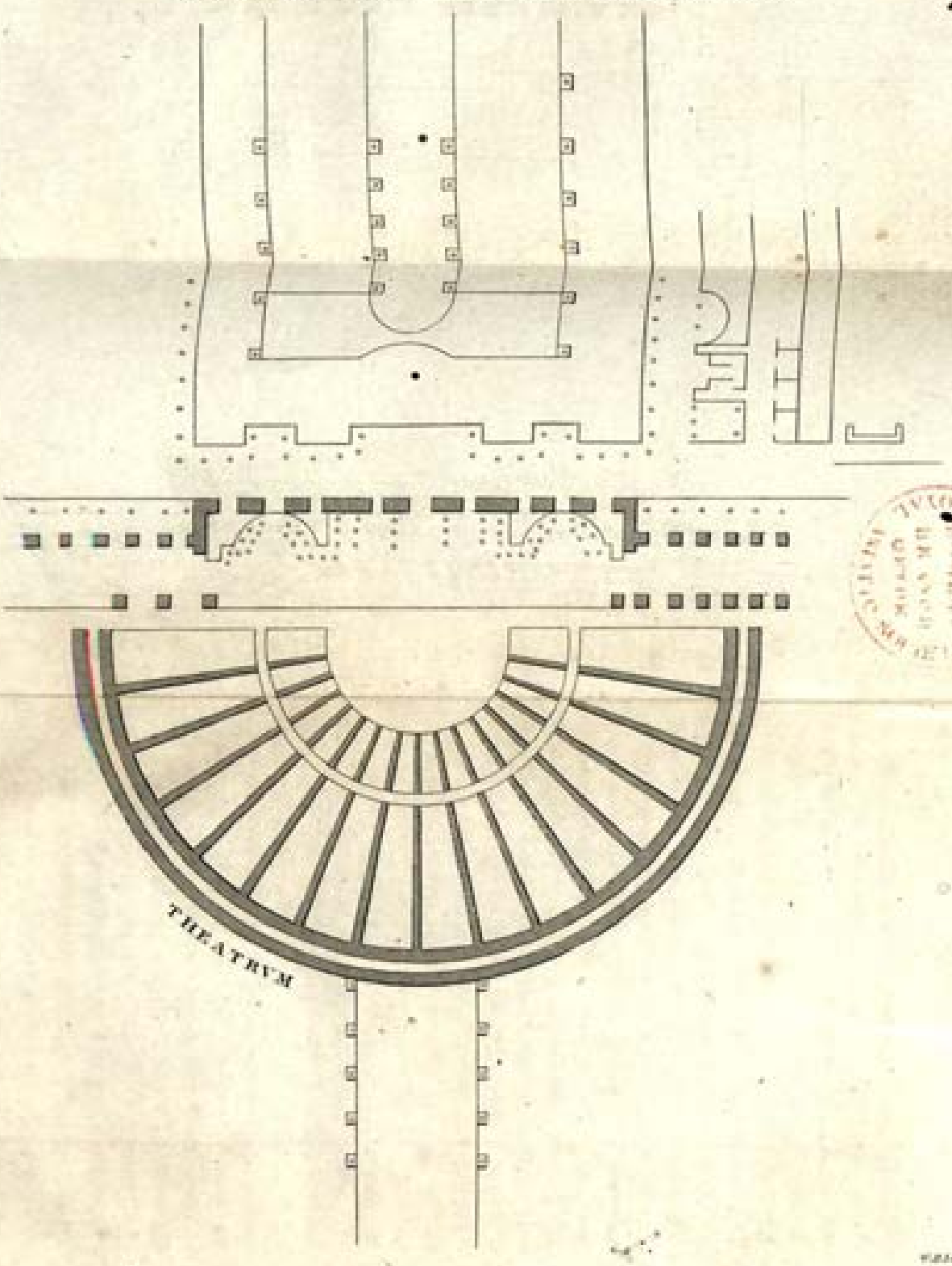
* Tacitus, Ann. lib. 14. c. 20.

† Plutarch's Life of Pompey, and Cic. Epist. Fam. lib. vii. c. 1.

‡ Plutarch's Life of Pompey.

POMPEY'S THEATRE.

FROM A FRAGMENT OF THE ANCIENT MARBLE PLAN OF ROME.



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Among the fragments of the ancient plan of Rome, there is a theatre believed to be that of Pompey, as rebuilt by Tiberius; from the Portico, the colonnades, and the public walks adjoining it, which exactly agree with all the descriptions of it. As it is interesting, because authentic, I copy it for you from Bellori's engraving.

From the orchestra, (*a*,) in which the Senators sat, the Gradii, or rows of seats, not depicted in the plan, rose gradually in the same semi-circular line, one above another, to the top, but were divided by two precinctiones; one, (*b*,) in which the equestrian order sat, and another, (*c*,) which was common to the plebeians, and above which there was only one circle of seats, supposed to be intended for the women. The seats from top to bottom were vertically cut by narrow stair-cases, (*d*,) and every division between them (*e*) was called a Cuneus. The straight line (*f*) divided the orchestra from the stage. The Proscenium (*g*) was richly decorated with columns, and terminated in two grand semi-circular recesses (*h*) on each side of the central one.

The plan of this theatre precisely resembles one of those at Pompeii. It has also the Postscenium, or covered porticos, (*i*) usually occupied only by the actors who were not on the stage, but to which, Vitruvius * tells us, the spectators retired for shel-

* Vitruvius, lib. v. c. 9. "Post scenam porticus sunt constituenda uti cum imbres repentini ludos interpallaverint, habeat populus, quo se recipiat ex theatro," &c.—"Uti sunt Porticus Pompeianæ."

ter when surprised by sudden rain, in which case the performances were necessarily suspended; for ancient theatres were almost invariably open,* and the spectators were shaded from the sun only by a moveable awning, which did not extend over the stage.

Before we begin to exclaim against the folly of the Greeks and Romans in this particular, let us remember, that without being guilty of any very gross absurdity, they might in these climates find the freshness of the open air preferable to the stifling atmosphere of an imprisoned crowd.

I have myself, with real enjoyment, seen plays in the open air in Italy, in that hour of delicious coolness which in summer precedes the setting of the sun, when no temptation could have induced me to have entered the walls of a closed theatre.

Beyond the Postscenium (I) were the beautiful public walks and magnificent colonnades, (LL) adorned with exquisite statues and paintings, so often alluded to by the poets, and which so long continued the favourite and fashionable promenade of the Romans.†

Julius Cæsar intended to have built a theatre,‡ to outvie in magnificence that of his rival; but he was prevented by death, and his design was carried into effect by Augustus, who built the Theatre of

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* One of the Theatres of Pompeii was covered. But this is the only instance of a *theatrum tectum* that I remember.

† Propertius, lib. ii. Eleg. 32. Martial, lib. ii. Ep. 14.

‡ Suetonius, Life of Julius Cæsar.

Marcellus, which he named after his beloved nephew, the pride and promise of the Roman youth, whose untimely death Virgil commemorated in that eloquent and pathetic strain of sorrowing panegyric, which was sufficient to immortalize both the poet and the hero.

Augustus dedicated this theatre by the slaughter of—I forget how many—hundreds of wild beasts; but afterwards, like that of Pompey, it was used for dramatic representations.

If the histrionic art was late in getting a legal footing in Rome, it was soon deprived of it, for Tiberius turned all the players out of Italy* at the same time that he very consistently rebuilt the Theatre of Pompey, which had been burnt down.

The vestiges of the once magnificent Theatre of Marcellus, are the only existing remains of the theatres of ancient Rome.

Like the Coliseum, it was built of Tiburtine

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* Tacitus, Ann. lib. iv.—The reasons assigned by the Emperor, in his address to the Senate, for exiling these unfortunate actors, were, "that they frequently raised seditious tumults, and introduced licentiousness into private families; and that the Oscan farce, formerly the contemptible delight of the vulgar, had now risen to such a pitch of universal popularity and enormity, that it required the authority of the Senate to check it." By the obsequious conscript fathers, accordingly, "the players were expelled from Italy." By "the vulgar," who took delight in the contemptible Oscan farce, I presume Tiberius alluded to Cicero, Atticus, Pompey, &c. the friends of Roscius, and the constant attenders of the theatre, to admire his inimitable performances.

stone, and consisted of four orders of Arcades, of which the Doric, the Ionic, and the Corinthian, are supported by semi-columns, and the attic by Corinthian pilasters.

Their architecture is considered superior to that of the Amphitheatre; and although nothing now remains of this beautiful edifice, except a very small portion of the two lower Arcades, their beauty is so perfect, that they are the canon of the true proportions of the Doric and Ionic orders, when used in the same building.

To the architect, therefore, these mutilated remains of the Theatre of Marcellus may be useful, and in his eye beautiful; but to the common observer they can only be disgusting.

I had been told that a palace had been erected on the ruins of the Theatre of Marcellus—but such a palace! Good heavens, could you but behold it! Could you but see the dens, surrounded by filth, and inhabited by abandoned vice, squalid penury, and revolting wretchedness, which bear the name!

The noble family of Orsini, (once so princely and powerful,) who possessed it, are literally beggars, and it is now inhabited by the lowest orders of the people.

Thinking that the inside might present something more pleasing than the exterior promised, we all entered upon a narrow staircase, which so grievously molested our olfactory nerves, that all the party, except myself, turned back at the threshhold. I went through it, and got into a modern court adorned with a bas relief of a gladiator fight-

ing with a lion, and two beautifully sculptured marble sarcophagi.

Nothing more was to be seen: I followed the internal sweep of one of the ancient corridors a little way, but was glad to return.

Like almost all the ruins of Rome, the Theatre of Marcellus served, during the disastrous times of civil war, as the strong-hold of one of its turbulent nobles. It was, I think, the family of the Savelli, who reigned here, the petty despots of the ancient mistress of the world.

LETTER XXVII.

PORTICOS.—THE PORTICO OF OCTAVIA.

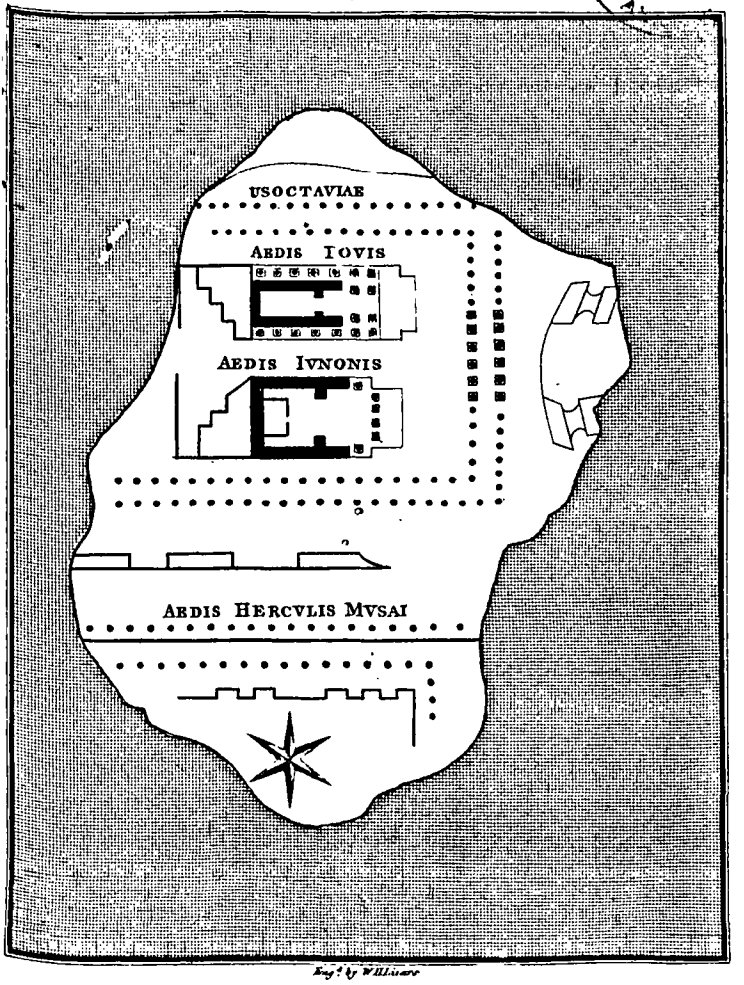
Of all the noble Porticos of Ancient Rome, a fragment of the Portico of Octavia alone remains. It was one of the many works of magnificence with which Augustus adorned the city he enslaved; and in honour of his sister, the virtuous and neglected wife of Anthony, he called it the Portico of Octavia, as he had already given the name of her lamented son to the adjoining Theatre of Marcellus, to which, indeed, it was an appendage. There the people used to loiter before the play began, and there they found shelter when driven from it by sudden storms.

The Portico of Octavia consisted—but a plan will do more to make you understand it than a long description, and I therefore subjoin a copy from a fragment of the ancient plan of Rome, which contains a part of this Portico.—It consisted, as you now see, of a double line of marble columns, enclosing a large oblong square; and although ac-

PORTICO OF OCTAVIA.

ANCIENT PLAN OF ROME

Fragment 2.



Engd by Williams

Edinburgh Published by A. Constable & Co.t 1820.

cessible at every intercolumniation, it had also two grand entrances in the narrower ends. This magnificent double colonnade was roofed, so as to give shelter and shade to those who walked, lounged, or talked within it. Thus the weather presented no obstacle to exercise or amusement, and at pleasure they could seek the open part in the centre, where stood the Temples of Jupiter and Juno, the first in Rome that were built of marble.

Pliny relates, that, by mistake, the statues of the god and goddess were carried to the wrong temples; and the superstitious people, conceiving the stupidity of the porters to be the will of the deities, durst not remove them, so that the statue of Jove continued to stand in the Temple of Juno, and his was occupied by her image, although the sculpture and painting with which each was adorned, represented the symbols of the deity for which they were originally designed.

These temples were built by Metellus, from which circumstance, the Portico itself sometimes goes by his name. Many of the beautiful columns which composed it are built up in the miserable houses of the Jews which now cover its ancient site. We went to a wretched hole, (No. 11, Via di San Angelo in Pescheria,) where we saw three magnificent fluted Corinthian columns of Grecian marble, supposed to be remains of the Temple of Juno, because that of Jupiter was Ionic. This is gathered from Pliny, who relates, that the Spartan architects who built this temple being denied permission to put their names upon their work, devi-

sed a method of eluding this law. They were called Saurus and Batracus, which signify a lizard and a frog; and accordingly they carved the figures of these reptiles in the Ionic capitals of the temple. Now the little industrious minuteness of antiquaries has enabled them to detect an Ionic capital marked with these singular figures, in the old Church of San Lorenzo fuore le Mura.

This discovery was an event of great importance to all the tribe; and Nardini, Venuti, and Winkelman, severally make mention of them, and enter into long discussions, which I will spare you,—as to whether this be one of the columns in question, or not.*

I was, however, amused with the decision of one of the authors of the profound *Itineray* of Rome, upon the merits of this capital, which Winkelman, (whom we have hitherto, it would seem, erroneously considered a tolerable critic,) pronounced to be, "L'un des plus beaux chapiteaux de toute l'antiquité;" but which this great judge modestly assures us, is far too bad to have been executed at any such period. Winkelman, he says, thought he had found, in one of the Ionic capitals of this church, the frog and lizard sculptured by the Spartan architects, Saurus and Batracus. "*Ma troppo*

* Pliny says, "in columbarum spiris;" an epithet, one would think, sufficiently descriptive of the volutes of an Ionic column; but much cavilling has arisen upon it. In the Ionic capital at St Lorenzo, the frog is sculptured instead of the *rose*, in the eye of one volute, and on the other the lizard, in its own natural posture, encircles the rose.

sono infelici queste sculture per poterle referire al buon tempo di cui parla Plinio."

In the Portico of Octavia, it is said painters used to exhibit their works for the admiration or criticism of the public. It was, besides, permanently decorated with paintings and statues by the most celebrated masters. Pliny particularly mentions a Venus of singular beauty, the work of Phidias, which stood in it ;* and as it is generally believed the Venus de Medicis was found here, I wonder it has never been supposed to be that very statue. The grace, beauty, and finish of its style, however, so remote from the severity and grandeur of that of Phidias, I should suppose, would prove it incontestibly the work of a later and more polished age, even if it were certain that it was found in this Portico ; but, on the contrary, many pretend that it was discovered in the Villa Adriana. I should not have thought a Venus suited to the genius of Phidias, any more than laughing Cupids and Graces to the pencil of Michael Angelo, or a love song to the muse of Dante.

One of the three public libraries which Rome possessed in the Augustan age, was in this Portico.

Another was in the Portico of Liberty, on the Aventine Mount, formed by Asinius Pollio, in the Republican age, which Pliny tells us was the first public library in the world ; and the third in the Temple of the Palatine Apollo.

* Pliny, Nat. Hist. lib. xxxv. c. 5.

The remains of the Portico of Octavia stand in what I am convinced is the filthiest spot upon the whole face of the globe. It is the Pescheria, or fish-market; — the Ghetto, or crowded quarter where the Jews—whatever be their numbers—are condemned to reside; and while miles of uninhabited ground are comprised within the walls of Rome—while it becomes yearly more insalubrious from its desertion, and more deserted from its insalubrity—these poor Israelites are cooped up in a confined hole, the dirt, the stench, and the disgusting appearance of which, it is utterly impossible to conceive.

I thought its smells were enough to breed a pestilence; but it is a singular, and rather an unaccountable fact, that this very spot, with its narrow lanes, crowded population, and extremity of filth, is the healthiest quarter in Rome, and its inhabitants the most hardy and robust. This crowded population, indeed, must be considered its security against the scourge of the *mal-aria*, which affects the more deserted parts of Rome in exact proportion to their desertion; and indeed it is obvious that the city, but for its inhabitants, would be as unhealthy as the death-giving Campagna by which it is surrounded on all sides.

In opposition to all the rules that theory and experience have established in other towns; in Rome the most unhealthy parts are the high, the open, and the airy, and the most healthy, the low, the crowded, and the filthy.

Possibly the abundant gaps and discomforts of their houses, which, both in winter and summer,

drive the inhabitants to live a great deal out in the open air, and keep them thoroughly ventilated when they do stay within doors; as well as the fineness of the climate; may obviate some of the bad effects usually experienced in colder countries, from this condensed population and congregated filth. However this may be, the fact of its superior salubrity is undeniable.

The Roman Jews are said to be the descendants of the captives whom Titus led from Jerusalem. But Jews inhabited Rome long before that period; for at the death of Julius Cæsar they were amongst the number of his mourners.*

But I must return again to the Portico of Octavia, in which, with all my efforts, I never advance any farther. Its remains, however, may soon be described. They consist of a small part of one of the ancient entrances, in which may be traced the sum total of four Corinthian columns, and three pilasters of white marble, much hidden by brick walls. These, with a part of the ancient pediment, blotched over with some ugly painted saints, are the sole ancient remains of the Portico. But you must go to both the outsides, and examine well the inside, and hunt on foot amidst inconceivable filth, before you can see these broken brick walls, and half-hid columns. The tottering pediment has been supported by an arch built in the low ages, but with Roman brick. The cause of this singular care in propping up, instead of pulling down an old

* Suet. Life of Jul. Cæsar, c. lxxxiv.

ruin, was explained when our Cicerone pointed out to us that this fragment of the Pronaos of the ancient Portico, has had the honour of serving as a court to a wretched little church behind it, called the Holy Angel of the Fish-market—(Santo Angelo de' Pescheria.) And as in these early times it was essential to every church to have a court in front of it, in imitation of the area of a Pagan temple, the poor remains of this noble Portico were saved from destruction, because it would have been more troublesome and expensive to have built a new court than to keep up the old one.

The brick arches at the sides, (on the right and left of the modern arch in front,) are ancient, and are supposed to have formed the lateral entrances to the entrance of the Portico.

The inscription now remaining upon the Portico attests its restoration after fire, by Septimius Severus and Caracalla. I think there is nothing more worth notice about the Portico of Octavia, which, truth to say, is the most filthy, and about the least interesting, of the antiquities of Rome.

LETTER XXVIII.

THE AMPHITHEATRE.

THE first Amphitheatre at Rome was built in the reign of Augustus, by Statylius Taurus,* and it is believed some vestiges of it, or of some other Amphitheatre, were discovered in an excavation that was once made upon Monte Citorio.† Caligula began an Amphitheatre, which was left unfinished;‡ Nero erected one of wood,‖—and Trajan built one of stone and mortar, which was destroyed by Hadrian.§ Excepting these, which for the most part were never finished, or at best were ephemeral, Rome possessed only the Flavian Amphitheatre—the stupendous Coliseum—the magnitude and magnificence of which, indeed, seemed to preclude the necessity of any other.

The Coliseum is, however, a modern name, and whether it was derived from the colossal size of the building, or of the statue which stood before it—and whether the said statue was of marble or of bronze;

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* Suet. Life of Augustus.
† Nardini, Roma Antica.
‡ Suet. Life of Caligula.
‖ Suet. Life of Nero.
§ Spartianus—Life.

of Apollo or of Nero—are points that have been much and vainly discussed. Upon these momentous questions I shall only observe, in the first place, that Pliny somewhere mentions—though I cannot recover the passage—that Vespasian substituted the head of Apollo for that of Nero upon his colossal statue—which, according to him, was of marble, and one hundred and twenty feet high;—and, therefore, it seems probable, that the Colossus of the Amphitheatre was this identical body of Nero, provided with the new and less obnoxious head of Apollo; indeed, in those days, the heads of statues were taken off with nearly as little ceremony as those of the persons they represented;—and it was even common to make them with moveable heads, in order that the anticipated decapitation might be more easily accomplished. Secondly, I would observe, that, as it is still more unlikely that any statue of such magnitude—with whatever head—was standing there in the eighth century, when we hear for the first time of the Coliseum, I conceive the statue has nothing to do with the name, and that it has been derived from the magnitude of the building.

The venerable Bede, who died in A. D. 735, and in whose writings this appellation is first found, records the memorable prophesy of the pilgrims in that age—"While the Coliseum stands, Rome will stand—when the Coliseum falls, Rome will fall—when Rome falls, the world will fall."*

* See concluding chapter of the Decline and Fall.

The world was very near its fall, indeed, a few years ago, if its fate depended on that of the Coliseum, which would inevitably have tumbled down, had it not been propped by the immense buttress now raised against the tottering extremity of its broken circle, which was begun by the Pope, carried on by the French, and finished by the Pope. But I have begun at the wrong end, and have got to the fall of the Coliseum before I have related its erection.

This wonderful Amphitheatre was the work of only four years. Vespasian began to build it, upon the site of Nero's great pond, which he had drained, scarcely two years before his death; and two years afterwards, it was finished at the close of the short reign of Titus, who lived to dedicate it by the slaughter of five thousand wild beasts, before he fell, the first victim of the inhuman Domitian, who, it is said, commenced his remorseless career by the murder of his brother.*

The Coliseum, or the Flavian Amphitheatre, as it was called in the times of the Romans, certainly held eighty thousand, and, according to some accounts, eighty-seven thousand spectators; and by filling up the staircases, and standing wherever there was space, upwards of one hundred thousand

* And yet it is related, that this monster had at first such an abhorrence to the shedding of blood, that he mourned even over the death of animals, and endeavoured to prohibit the sacrifice of oxen.—Vide Suet. in Vit. Dom.

people are supposed to have crowded in to see the games. This computation, of course, includes the wooden galleries at the top.

In the Podium, or front circle, was the Suggestus, or canopied box of the Emperor, the seats of the Imperial Family, of the Vestal Virgins, Consuls, Senators, and all personages of the highest dignity in the state. They were defended, it is said, with a parapet, a grating, and horizontal spikes of iron, from the dangerous neighbourhood of the wild beasts. It is curious, however, that in the Amphitheatre of Pompeii, which remains as entire and fresh as if the games had been given yesterday, none of these safeguards are to be seen; and I could not help thinking, when I viewed it, that the Podium might be a dignified, but would be far from a desirable situation. That the august Romans, however, were effectually defended from the jaws of the lions, there can be no doubt; and, at all events, their safety signifies little to us now.

Above the Podium, the gradus, or enlarging circles of seats, were divided into præcinctiones, each of which comprised the rows contained in the height of one corridor. The first of these was appropriated to the equestrian order, or knights, whose badge of distinction was a gold ring. Like those of Consular rank, they were seated on cushions, (pulvillis.) The uncovered marble seats above, called Popularia, were filled by the unprivileged citizens, diminishing in consequence as they ascended; and last of all, at the very top—as the most unworthy—sat the women, in a wooden gallery;

for that despised sex was by law excluded from the seats of the men, who appropriated all the best to themselves. This, too, was an improvement, or refinement in manners; originally they were not thus banished the presence of the lords, or rather brutes, of the creation; and such an arrangement, it must be acknowledged, argues a very unenviable state of society.

The ranges of seats which encircled the interior of the building, were exactly like steep steps, and were divided by narrow stairs, which led straight from top to bottom, through all the præcinctiones, cutting the Amphitheatre perpendicularly into divisions. The space between each of these staircases was called, from its triangular, or wedge-like form, a Cuneus.

There were so great a number of entrances, or Vomitoria, from the corridors, that the whole of this amazing crowd could assemble or disperse without the smallest difficulty or confusion; and to the Arena there was free access by the two great arches of entrance at the oval ends.

The exterior is composed of four orders. The three first are Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian open arcades; and above them the attic is sustained by Corinthian pilasters. However deficient in some minuter points of correctness particular parts may be, no eye can fail to be struck with the grandeur and symmetry of the whole, which is perhaps the noblest building in the world. You gaze on it with unsatiated admiration; but the beauty and refinement of the arts which adorn it, form a stri-

king contrast to the barbarism of the purposes for which it was erected. If I might be permitted to find out a fault, (and one must seek for it—it does not suggest itself,) I should say that the Doric is scarcely sufficiently massive* for the base of such a building; and that, in proportion to it, the Ionic and Corinthian orders are too solid. But the fault lies in the Doric, which gives the superincumbent orders an appearance of heaviness.

We miss the trygliphs in the Doric frieze; and though its plainness might be pardoned, and even thought to give greater simplicity to the whole, the repetition of the same frieze in the Ionic is offensive, and has an air of poverty.

In Rome, we see nothing of the ancient Grecian Doric—the fluted columns without pedestals—that first and grandest of all styles of architecture. But however noble in itself, it would have been misplaced here. It would not have accorded with the superincumbent orders. Its proportions are too solid, and its simplicity too great, to harmonize with others. It should always stand alone, in its own native majesty, as in the incomparable Temples of Pæstum.

But the Coliseum owes its beauty to the grandeur of the whole, rather than the perfection of the parts; its immensity awes us into admiration. The staircases and seats were of marble, with which the

* The height of the Doric columns is nine diameters and a half.

whole of the interior is supposed to have been lined.

The Arena was open, but the seats were shaded by a moveable canvas awning, (vela, or velaria,*) to protect the spectators from the sun. It was a favourite diversion of one of the Emperors, (I forget which,) to throw the sun, suddenly, full in the face of some of their favourites, by pulling the cords that regulated its motions. The only sports, I believe, except the naval fights of the Naumachia, ever exhibited in the Amphitheatre, were combats of wild beasts against gladiators, or of gladiators against each other.†

Sometimes, indeed, the enlightened Romans seem to have enjoyed the exquisitely gratifying spectacle of wild beasts tearing to pieces condemned malefactors, or innocent Christians, exposed defenceless to their rage. Small bas reliefs found in the catacombs, and preserved in the Museo Sacro of the Vatican Library, represent these martyrs awaiting the loosening of the chained-up lion, raging to devour them. Human nature can scarcely bear to picture a situation of such overpowering horror, or adequately estimate the invincible constancy and sublime fortitude of those who voluntarily supported its tremendous tortures. While we adore

* Juvenal, lib. iv. Sat. 122.

† The numbers and frequency of these sanguinary sports are almost beyond belief. After the triumph of Trajan over the Dacians, they were exhibited for four months, without the cessation of a single day. Ten thousand gladiators fought, and eleven thousand wild beasts were slain.—Vide Dio, xlviii. 15.

the memory of the hero who braved a death of glory and honour, and the patriot who perished for his country amidst its plaudits and its tears; let us not be insensible to the transcendent virtue of the divine spirits who submitted to this revolting and ignominious end for the sake of their God. The cold-hearted ridicule of this deriding age, which has levelled its attacks against some of the noblest feelings of our nature, has not spared the memory of the Christian martyrs; and the absurd legends of monkish fraud and credulity have unhappily given support to its mockery. But the paper crown cannot debase the head of true royalty; and the heart must be cold that will not worship its image, and pay homage to its worth—however taunted or reviled. Perhaps there may be others like me, whose admiration is heightened by the internal consciousness, that the virtue they praise, they could not emulate.

That brutal madman, Commodus, who used to declare himself to be Hercules, and go about dressed in a lion's skin, and brandishing a club, with his hair sprinkled with gold-dust, to imitate the glory of the sun; frequently fought in the Amphitheatre as a gladiator, and killed both gladiators and wild beasts. It is a thousand pities he had not rather been killed as a wild beast himself. He had once, indeed, very nearly been murdered here; not in the Arena, but in the private passage from the Imperial Palace to it, where he was attacked by the first conspirators, but unfortunately escaped from their hands.

When a gladiator was vanquished and thrown upon the ground, his life was not at the disposal of his antagonist, but of the spectators. If they granted him mercy, they held up the thumb; if they commanded his death, they turned it down, and the conqueror instantly murdered him.

It is scarcely conceivable the possibility of the mandate, thus deliberately given, to plunge the dagger into the panting bosom of a disarmed and unoffending suppliant. Neither do I understand, —since in such a multitude there must have been great diversity of opinion, and some at least, in every case, would be found to lean to the natural side of mercy—how the victor gathered the sense of the spectators from this sign.

The fall of the Amphitheatre may be rapidly traced. Under Macrinus it was burnt; an accident somewhat inexplicable—if an accident it was—but not being formed of very combustible materials, it is probable that the wooden galleries at the top alone materially suffered.

It was repaired by Heliogabalus, and Gordian restored it still more thoroughly. All the mis-shapen columns, and hideous sculpture which were dug up in the recent excavations, and are now standing round the Arena, are attributed to his degenerate reign.

Not to dwell upon the oscillations of damage and repair, it is certain that it must have been uninjured in the sixth century, when the sports of the Amphitheatre—though they had been prohibited two hundred years before—were not entirely dis-

continued; and the fights of gladiators still moved the indignation of the Christian fathers.*

Even at a considerably later period, (the eighth century,) the Coliseum is supposed, from the reports of the pilgrims,† to have been entire; nor is there any appearance of its destruction having begun till the eleventh century, when it was converted into the strong-hold of a Roman baron; and thus, by a sort of retributive justice, the building that ministered in one age to the guilty passion of the Romans for blood, became, in another, the instrument of their own oppression and destruction.

It was one of the numerous castles of the Frangipani family, who seem to have possessed themselves of a system of fortresses erected on the ruins of Rome, and encircling the Imperial Palace on the Palatine, which they also occupied. The Arch of Titus and of Constantine, the Septizonium of Severus, and the Arch of Janus Quadrifontis, were theirs; as well as the immense fabric of the Coliseum, to which Popes and Antipopes successively resorted for protection. It was stormed and besieged, taken and retaken; but though it changed its masters, it continued a fortress till the beginning of the fourteenth century, when its hostile occupation was finally relinquished.

It then became the scene of a bull-fight, attended with all the pomp and circumstance, and chi-

* St Augustin, I believe, mentions them; but I only quote his testimony at second-hand.

† Vide Gibbon's Decline and Fall, last Chapter.

valrous spirit of a solemn tournament, but with a far more tragical termination; for eighteen of the young and noble champions who entered the lists, bearing on their shields romantic devices emblematical of their passion, perished in the unequal conflict with furious wild bulls, which they encountered singly. But it will become me best to pass over in silence what has been already so ably described by the pen of Gibbon.*

The Amphitheatre was converted into an hospital by the brethren of the Sancta Sanctorum Company, at the end of the fourteenth century; and as their arms are still visible, painted on the ruined arcades of the southern side, the Roman antiquaries infer that this part must have been destroyed before that time, though there is no previous record of its spoliation. To me the proof does not seem quite so conclusive, because the Coliseum was the acknowledged property of these brethren, even in the commencement of the seventeenth century; and therefore it is by no means clear that the arms we now see were painted in the fourteenth.

The "indignant Poggius" laments, that in the fifteenth century, the principal part of its stones had been burnt to lime; but surely this must refer to the interior coating, which was of marble, for Tiburtine stone would scarcely be used for such a purpose.†

* Vide Gibbon's Decline and Fall, last Chapter, containing an interesting account of the Coliseum, and of the remains of Ancient Rome.

† The large blocks of Tiburtine stone, of which the Coli-

During the sixteenth century, it seems to have been first turned into a quarry. All the noble Romans, Guelphs, and Ghibellines, friends and foes, all parties and factions, agreed on one thing, to pull down the walls of the Coliseum whenever they wanted stones. By common consent, they made a written compact for this laudable purpose; and the Abbé Barthelemy, the accurate and enlightened author of Anacharsis, mentions that this curious document was among the archives of Rome.*

It is related in many old books, and the story is confirmed by many old men, that Cardinal Farnese, a nephew of Paul III. obtained, after much importunity, a fretful permission from his uncle to take away the stones from this magnificent building for *twelve hours* only; and that, profiting by the licence, he let loose an army of 4000 workmen to assail its walls. It may be imagined the effects of the work of this day!

Facts, however, are so difficult to ascertain in Rome, from the total disregard to truth prevalent here—I am sorry to say, among all classes—that I cannot answer for this statement. But it is most certain, that whatever might have been the chari-

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seum is built, are too valuable in a city which is twenty miles from a quarry, to be used for lime. This scarcity of building materials has been one great cause of the destruction of ancient edifices. Leading the stones for St Peter's, cost more than the whole expense of building St Paul's.

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, last Chapter, p. 377. It has never since been seen.

ness of the said Pontiff, when he restricted its demolition to twelve hours, it was remorselessly pulled down during his pontificate; and it is at this period, (the sixteenth century,) that its ruin may be dated.* It was then that the immense bulk of the Venetian and Farnese Palaces, the Palatine Summer-houses, and one-half of the buildings of Rome, were erected with its materials. I could forgive Michael Angelo the frightfulness of these Farnese structures, but never the source from which he took the stones. It seems as if the sacrilege he committed upon the glorious works of past ages, cast a spell over his own; for the architecture of the buildings he raised is as little honourable to his genius, as the spoliation of the Coliseum, to his taste.

In the seventeenth century, Sixtus V. attempted to establish a woollen manufactory here, but fortunately the project failed. The sanctification of its remains, about the middle of the last century, by Benedict the Fourteenth, in late remembrance of the blood of the blessed martyrs who were sacrificed here, alone saved it from utter destruction.

Yet, even after it was declared holy, and sacred to the memory of these blessed martyrs, the lowest corridor was converted into a receptacle of dung for the purpose of making saltpetre, in which state it remained till the French came and cleansed this Au-

* The Theatre of Marcellus, also served as one of the quarries of this princely and palace-building family.

gean stable. There was a little hermitage, with its chapel, for several centuries, in the Coliseum; and it never failed to be inhabited by a hermit, till the French came and shot him;—properly enough, indeed, if it be true that he had been guilty of robbery and murder.

I gave the Pope considerable credit when I came to Rome and found workmen employed in carrying away the rubbish of this old den; but, alas! it only made way for a new one, in which a grey-bearded capuchin sits, who I suppose acts at present the part of hermit, and who begs most pertinaciously for the support of the Virgin, and the holy souls in purgatory, modestly never mentioning himself.

Endless have been the discussions as to the pavement of the Arena, or whether it had any pavement at all. Some of the learned maintain it was covered with wood, and had moveable lids, or trap-doors, through which the wild beasts sprung up from below, like the ghosts in a play. Others say, the wild beasts walked in at the sides like regular actors, and that the Arena was paved with marble.

The fact is, I believe, that whatever the permanent flooring might be, it was uniformly covered, during the games, with sand, or saw-dust, (as indeed its name implies,) to receive the blood of the dead and wounded men and beasts, and prevent the ground from becoming slippery with gore.

It is a disputed point whether the ancient Arena was on the same level as the present, or not. Several of the Roman antiquaries maintain, that it

was formerly ten feet lower; and although they must all have seen its very substructions when they were laid bare by the French, they have not yet been able to settle the point amongst themselves. There is a vaulted subterraneous passage recently discovered, which terminates at the Arena, and the roof of which is exactly below the level of its present surface; but as it has evidently led to it, I conclude it must have been upon the same level, and that the ancient one was exactly as much below the present as the height of this passage, which is not very great. It is called the private passage of the Emperors. If so, it certainly was not a very magnificent one. It is now, as it always must have been, low and dark; for its stuccoed cieling, and mosaic pavement, still remain. It leads, too, in a direct line south, from the south side of the Coliseum, while the Imperial Palace lies to the north-west. "But," say the antiquaries, "though it seems to go in a contrary direction, it *must* have taken a bend round to the Palace." It may be so; but it seems a singular contrivance to make the Emperors describe a large circle, when they could have come in a straight line, and more especially as the way is so dismal, that it could not have been done for the pleasure of the walk.

For my part, I suspect this pretended private passage of the Emperors to have been the passage of the wild beasts. The nature of the animals, indeed, was so similar, that the mistake is little more than in name; but it is certain that the passage in question leads directly in a line towards their dens

—I mean the wild beasts—and therefore I cannot help suspecting it to have been made for their accommodation. Some of these dens are still to be seen below the Convent of St John and St Paul, on the Cœlian Mount, in a building called by the absurd name of the Curia Hostilia; but (for a miracle) all—even the antiquaries—seem agreed that it was a Vivarium for keeping the beasts before their exhibition in the Coliseum. I saw last winter one of the iron rings to which they had been fastened, but I lately sought for it in vain. It has, however, been seen by many eyes besides mine; and this circumstance alone would be sufficient to prove the destination of the building, if it admitted of doubt. It is manifestly of the same date, and built of the same materials, as the Coliseum, which it resembles so exactly, that one might suppose a portion of the Arcades had been conveyed up the hill. It is supposed to have been built by Domitian. The grand Vivarium was near the Porta Maggiore; but its distance would render another necessary near the Coliseum, to keep the wild beasts in before they were brought out, as it would not be easy to bring down every lion as it was wanted, from the other end of the town. But though there seems little reason to doubt that this was a Vivarium, I think it but fair to inform you, that the communication between it and the Coliseum, by means of the low vaulted passage, is merely my own opinion, and therefore, perhaps, not entitled to much credit.

The holes which disfigure the exterior of the Co-

liseum, in the part that remains perfect, have excited much speculation. They are evidently not the effects of chance or time, but of design and laborious execution; but why they were made, it is not so easy to discover. The common opinion is, that it was to get at the cramps that fastened the stones together; and to give this notion some shadow of probability, it has been supposed that these cramps were of bronze. But we can scarcely believe that the Romans would use a very costly metal, wholly unfit for their purpose, when a very cheap one was well adapted to it. Bronze would scarcely hold stone walls together, iron might. The cramps, therefore, if any there were, must have been of iron. But in no part of the wall that has been laid open, is there any appearance of cramps, or of the holes they must have made. Granting, however, there were such things; surely it must have cost less trouble to have made a piece of iron, (and in no age was that art forgotten,) than to have undergone the incredible labour of boring through those solid blocks of stone, to get at such little bits of it. The more probable account of the matter is, that these holes were made for the poles that supported the booths of the artisans, who crowded these corridors with their temporary shops during the fairs held here.*

If that won't do, it has occurred to me that the

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* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, last Chapter. Donatus Roma Vetus et Cura.

holes may have been made during the long course of years that the Coliseum was a fortress, and attacked and defended with all the fury of civil combat; or if this does not satisfy you, perhaps they were made at the period that the people of Rome had a mania for searching old ruins for hidden treasures, in one of which paroxysms, they broke into the little arch of Septimius Severus, in the Forum Boarium, and did an infinite deal of mischief in the way of pulling down old walls, and ransacked every imaginable place in the unprofitable search. But if all, or none of these causes will content you, then I must refer you to the elaborate and erudite treatise written by an ancient bishop, in folio, on all the possible and impossible causes of these holes:—the aspect of which profound work was so appalling to me, that I can give no other account of it than its dimensions; but I think the task of reading it through, will prove a sufficient atonement, if not cure, for your incredulity.

On the outside of the Coliseum, are the crumbling remains of a building supposed to have been the Meta Sudans, that famous fountain whose waters refreshed the Romans during the games.*

We have now finished the survey of this stupendous edifice. Since it was erected, what changes

* There is a fountain, supposed to be the Meta Sudans, sculptured in bas relief, between two lions, on a marble tomb, (in the shape of a large tub,) which stands on the first gallery of the Vatican, after passing the Gallery of Inscriptions, on the right hand side.

have covered the earth! New arts, new institutions, new languages, and new religions, have sprung up; new worlds have been discovered, and new nations have advanced to civilization, and sunk into decay; and yet the Coliseum stands in its ruins unrivalled and alone.

But, all beautiful as it is, we must ever regard it with mingled admiration and horror. It is laid in everlasting ruin, like the gigantic power that raised it. What eye, in that proud day of its dedication, when the Roman sway extended over every part of the known world, from the confines of India, and the desarts of Africa, to utmost Thule—what eye could then have foreseen the future fall of that building meant for eternity—of that empire that grasped at infinity? And yet may we not, in our retrospective glance, trace the destroyer of both, in those very vices which this proud fabric was destined to foster?

Certainly, if the characters of nations may be estimated from their favourite sports, that of the Romans must bear the stain of the blackest cruelty. No nation, in ancient or modern times, has revelled with the same savage avidity in human blood. This horrible passion did not appear in its full force till after the final fall of the Republic. Virtue and liberty vanished together. Unmitigated despotism, unparalleled cruelty, unnatural depravity, unimagined vices, and unpunished crimes, rapidly increased, with the appetite for those inhuman diversions which have left a foul blot upon our nature.

The passion for these detestable sports is indeed

a curious chapter of the history of the human mind, and one which might furnish important materials to the philosopher. It does not appear to be the reproach of one people, or the barbarous taste of one age, acquired from some peculiar bias, or derived from imitation; but, unnatural as it seems, it was the delight of all the nations of antiquity, and, to this very day, the same sports are practised in the remote Indian islands, whose sequestered inhabitants never heard of the Roman name. The Javanese have games in which tigers fight with other wild beasts, and with condemned criminals.*

Nor need we go so far for examples—the bull-fights in Spain, and in modern Rome itself,—perhaps, too, the bull-baitings and cock-fights in England, are still food for the same passion, and conclusive proofs of its existence, although no longer gorged with human blood.

For Christianity was reserved the signal triumph over this long-indulged, most cherished, and fiercest passion of the soul. The games of the Amphitheatre were for ever abolished by Honorius.

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* I asserted this upon the information of a friend who had been in Java; and, since my return to England, I have found this fact confirmed in Raffles's History of that island.

LETTER XXIX.

ANCIENT THERMÆ.—VESTIGES OF THE BATHS OF AGRIPPA AND CONSTANTINE, OF THE PRETENDED BATHS OF PAULUS ÆMILIUS, AND OF THE BATHS OF SANTA HELENA.—THE THERMÆ OF CARACALLA.—PISCINA PUBLICA.

THE less that is known about any thing, the more may be said. Volumes without end have been written on the subject of the Baths or Thermæ of the Ancients, and nobody is any wiser;—at least, I can answer for myself. I found indeed that the contradictory assertions, and irreconcileable hypotheses, contained in these elaborate treatises, only tended to make "confusion worse confounded;" and that the more I studied, the less I knew. I consulted the professed antiquaries: but what one told me was contradicted by another; and the newly admitted belief of yesterday was chased out of my understanding by the later imbibed ideas of to-day. I applied in my perplexity to a learned friend who has passed most of his life in Rome. He gave me all the information in his power; but candidly

owned, that, after a long and diligent examination of the remains of the ancient Thermæ, he had never been able to form any accurate idea of their plan; so that what he could not comprehend after twenty years of study, I need not pretend to explain after a two years residence in Rome.

I have often wished in my dilemma about all and each of the ruins of Rome, that I could "call up some spirit from the mighty dead," to conduct me through them, remove my doubts and answer my enquiries. What a Cicerone would an old Roman make! Not that I would recall a Cicero to a world unworthy of him, to fill the ignoble office which is so impudently dignified by his name; or disturb the stoic shades of a Scipio, a Brutus, or a Cato, to escort an inquisitive young barbarian, like me, over the scenes once consecrated by their presence. Their republican souls would know no more than we do of the remains of imperial luxury, that now cover the City of the Seven Hills. Some Roman of the more degenerate days of empire I would choose for my guide; and, if I thought "he would come when I did call on him," I would invoke the shade of the younger Pliny; and get him, among other things, to explain the plan of the Thermæ.

We need no ghost certainly to tell us that the use of baths was to bathe in; but these baths had many other uses besides. They were designed to unite every mode of recreation. They had spacious halls for social assemblies,—courts and theatres for athletic sports,—shady porticoes for the recitations of poets and the lectures of philosophers,—

" and all things for all men." In short, they were to the Romans something like what our coffee-rooms and news-rooms are to the English; only that they had neither newspapers nor coffee,—that the sole refreshment was water, taken externally, instead of punch or negus internally; and that they had philosophical instead of political disputes.

But neither coffee-houses, nor any institutions of modern days, bear any real similitude to them. We have no buildings to compare them to,—no habits to refer them to; they were suited to a different age, people, climate, and state of society; and among all the dubious and perplexing antiquities of Rome, none certainly are so dubious and perplexing as the remains of these Thermæ. Even Vitruvius gives us no light here; for although the Thermæ of Agrippa must have been built in his time, he describes only the private baths of the Romans, which, however luxurious, bear no analogy whatever to these public Thermæ.

An ancient author* tells us, that in the proud days of Roman Empire, there were whole provinces of Thermæ; and Pliny gives a splendid description of the sculptures and paintings, the magnificent seats and costly vases, the profusion of gold and silver, of ivory and precious stones, and all the sumptuous decorations, that filled these gigantic establishments of pleasure.

Their magnitude and magnificence, indeed, are sufficiently attested by their mighty ruins, which,

* Ammian.

even after the dilapidations of ages of barbarism, still stand, incontestible monuments of the grandeur, the luxury, and the idleness of the Romans.

But whatever might have been the predilection of the ancient Romans for bathing, we must acquit the moderns of that, and of every other species of luxury which bears the most remote affinity to cleanliness. Pliny, in his minute and interesting description of his Laurentinum Villa*, tells us, that, besides his own private baths, the neighbouring village contained no less than three public baths, which were sufficiently elegant and commodious, for the use of his guests. But Rome itself has not now a single public bath; and private baths rarely, if ever, form a part even of the spacious and costly palaces of the nobility. Excepting some, on a very confined scale, belonging to one of the hotels, and almost exclusively frequented by foreigners, there are no baths in Rome.

I have often regretted that some of the numerous fountains, whose waste of waters so delightfully embellishes Rome, were not used for this purpose; and perhaps if the Popes had built fewer churches and more baths, it would have been better for the bodies of their subjects, and not worse for their souls.

But I have somehow made a transition from ancient to modern Rome, and it is high time to return from these visionary baths of her Popes, to the ruined Thermæ of her Emperors.

Of the long list of Thermæ that adorned impe-

* Ep. xvii. Plin.

rial Rome, the ruins of those of Titus, of Caracalla, and of Diocletian, are all that now remain; except that the Rotonda of the Pantheon, and the broken Arco di Ciambella behind it, may be considered as vestiges of the Baths of Agrippa; and the ruins in the Colonna Gardens, of those of Constantine,—the first and the last Thermæ that ever were erected in Rome.

Some remains of the Forum of Trajan, indeed, are vulgarly called the Baths of Paulus Emilius, although we have no reason to believe that he ever made any baths at all; nor, as they were luxuries wholly unknown to the Republic, is it at all probable he ever did. Indeed we may be sure, that had he built any thing so extraordinary, Plutarch, who records the Basilica of his erection, would not have omitted to have mentioned it. Juvenal indeed alludes to the Baths of Paulus;* but it does not follow that there never was, at any period, any other Paulus than Paulus Emilius.

There are some inconsiderable vestiges of the Baths of the Empress Helena, in the grounds of the Villa Massimi, on the Esquiline Hill. A few low broken fragments of brick wall might belong to any thing, but an inscription was found there which attested their identity.†

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* Ut forte rogatus
Dum petit aut Thermas aut Balneæ Pauli, &c.
JUVENAL.

† It is now placed above the porphyry Sarcophagus of that Empress, in the Sala Della Croce Greca, in the Vatican.

Some uninteresting ruins of Roman date, in a vineyard between the Aventine and the Tiber, (the entrance to which is through a red wooden gate on the right of the road going towards the Porta San Paolo) are called, on conjecture, the Baths of Decius; although it seems more probable that the baths of that Emperor were on the Aventine Hill.*

But these are inconsiderable and unintelligible remains, scarcely worth notice. Even the ruins of the three principal Thermæ, immense as is their extent, have evidently formed but a small part of their ancient magnitude. The ingenuity of antiquaries has formed, from their confused remains, a variety of fanciful and conjectural plans; but as they are all at variance with each other,—like the four genuine and original portraits of Shakespeare which bear between them no shade of resemblance,—we may be allowed to doubt if any of them be the true one.

The following figure, slightly sketched from the existing remains of the Baths of Caracalla and Diocletian, (which bear a much closer resemblance to each other than those of Titus) without any attempt at pretended minuteness or accuracy, which can only serve to mislead where there are no data to go upon, may perhaps enable you to form some general idea of their plan.

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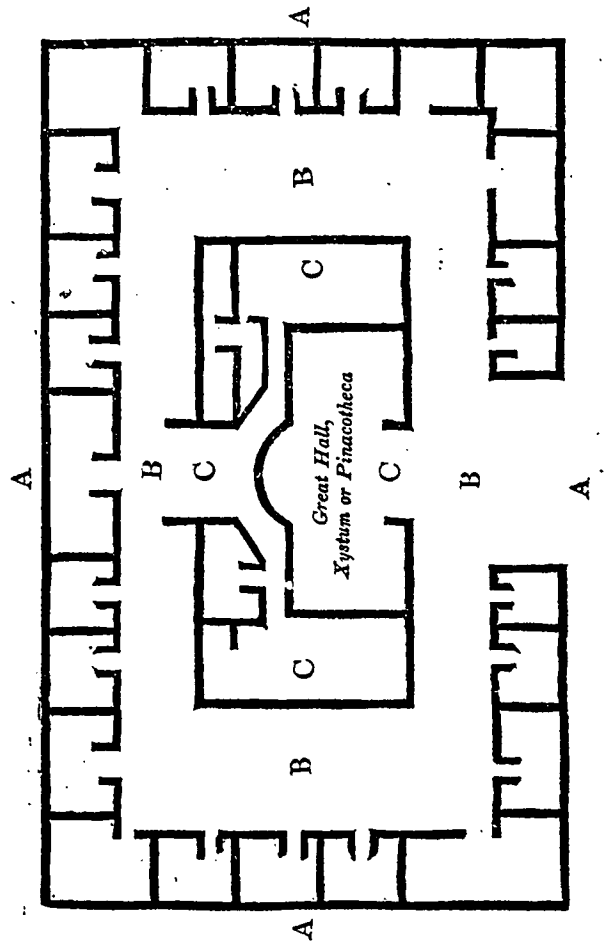
* Vide Nardini, Roma Antica, Aventino.



They all seem to have consisted of an external part, (A.) the lower story of which was dark, subterranean, lighted by lamps, and contained the whole range of the hot-baths. It surrounded the

internal part, (C.) from which it was generally divided by an open space, (B.) filled with shady walks, or gardens, a Gymnasium, and sometimes with a sort of Stadium for running foot-races.

The internal part, (C.)—which, in the Baths of Diocletian and Caracalla, had no subterranean storey,—consisted entirely of places for recreation —covered porticoes for walking, sheltered from the sea and rain; courts and theatres for active sports; libraries for study, and apartments for idling.—There was generally, at least, one great covered hall, or Pinacotheca, (vide Plan, C.) in every Thermæ, supposed to be devoted to this last laudable purpose; though, according to some authorities, it was used as a Xystum, or place for wrestling, in bad weather, as well as for a great lounging room.

One of these great covered halls (that of the Baths of Diocletian) is still entire, and is now converted into a church; but of this I shall speak in our visit to these ruins.

The remains of the Thermæ of Caracalla, to which we must first direct our steps, consist entirely of the upper story, and of the internal part; which internal part, neither in these baths, nor in the Baths of Diocletian, ever had a subterranean storey. There is now no access into the subterranean storey of the external part, (vide Plan A) and, indeed, no appearance of it in either of these Thermæ; but it is said excavations have frequently been made into both.

The Baths of Caracalla are situated at the base of the most southern of the heights of the Aventine, on the Via Appia, remote from the actual ex

tent of the modern city, though within the circuit of its walls.

They now present an immense mass of frowning and roofless ruins abandoned to decay; and their fallen grandeur, their almost immeasurable extent, —the tremendous fragments of broken wall that fill them,—the wild weeds and brambles which shade them,—their solitude and their silence; the magnificence they once displayed, and the desolation they now exhibit,—are powerfully calculated to affect the imagination.

We passed through a long succession of immense halls, open to the sky, whose pavements of costly marbles and rich mosaics, long since torn away, have been supplied by the soft green turf, that forms a carpet more in unison with their deserted state. The wind, sighing through the branches of the aged trees that have taken root in them without rivalling their loftiness, was the only sound we heard; and the bird of prey, which burst through the thick ivy of the broken wall far above us, was the only living object we beheld.

These immense halls formed a part of the internal division of the Thermæ which was entirely devoted to purposes of amusement.

The first of these halls, or rather walled inclosures, you enter, and several of the others, have evidently been open in the centre. They were surrounded by covered porticoes, supported by immense columns of granite, which have long since been carried away, chiefly by the Popes and Princes

of the Farnese family. In consequence of their loss, the roofs fell with a concussion so tremendous, that it is said to have been felt even in Rome, like the distant shock of an earthquake. Fragments of this vaulted roof are still hanging at the corners of the portico. The open part in the centre was probably destined for athletic sports.

One of the halls, the famous Cella Solearis, which could not have been less than 150 feet in length, and held 160 marble seats, was entirely covered with a flat roof of stone, which was considered a miracle of architecture. It is supposed to have been supported by flat crossing bands of metal, forming a thick chequer work; and from their resemblance to the Solea, or straps, used to bind the sandals round the feet and ancles, the hall was denominated Cella Solearis. This astonishing work is said to have been executed by Egyptian artists.

Many have been the doubts and disputes among antiquaries, which of these halls has the best claim to be considered as this once wonderful Cella Solearis. All are roofless now; but the most eastern of them, that which is furthest to the left on entering, and which has evidently had windows, seems generally to enjoy the reputation.

Besides these enormous halls, there are on the western side of these ruins the remains of a Rotondo, or large circular building, and a great number of smaller divisions of all sizes and forms, in their purpose wholly incomprehensible. We may suppose them to have been places in which the learned harangued their disciples, philosophers held

their controversies, and poets recited their verses; or, since Ancient Rome was by no means exclusively populated with these exalted minds—in which mere ordinary souls used to talk and amuse themselves. Such, too, would seek the Spheristia, or tennis courts, or places for playing at ball; an amusement, indeed, which we know the sternest of philosophers and censors—even the elder Cato himself, did not disdain to practise.

In fact, no satisfactory idea can be formed from the remains we see of the peculiar destination of any particular parts, and imagination at last desists, fatigued with the ineffectual attempt to picture what they were. Excepting that they belonged to that part of the Thermæ destined for purposes of amusement, nothing can now be known; and though the immense extent of the baths may be traced far from hence by their wide-spreading ruins, it is equally difficult and unprofitable to explore them any farther.

In the last of these halls there is a deep draw-well; and in one of our many visits to these ruins, we found a young Englishman of our acquaintance, who, in his ardour for antiquities, was on the point of descending in the bucket to the bottom of it. This was carrying the maxim of seeking "truth at the bottom of a well" rather too literally into execution, but he was so sure that he should make some wonderful discovery there, that we could not succeed in stopping him, till we called in the testimony of the old woman who opens the door, in corroboration of our own, to prove that the well

was not *antico*, but made for the use of the pigs that now revel undisturbed in all the luxuries of these imperial halls.

Splendid as they were, perhaps in ancient times as in the present, they were often filled with the swinish multitude.

A broken staircase leads up to the top of the ruins, but it is in so dilapidated a state, that the ascent has become extremely perilous.

This immense interior is supposed to have been surrounded with an external part, (vide plan A,) of course still more immense, forming a subterranean oblong square, which, besides the baths, contained the Exedræ, or buildings for the slaves who attended the baths, the police who regulated, and the soldiers who guarded them.

The Thermæ consisted of every possible modification and auxiliary of bathing that luxury could devise. First, there was an Apoditerium, or great undressing-room,—a Sudatorium, Laconicum, or vapour bath,—a Caldarium, or hot bath,—a Tepidarium, or tepid bath,—a Frigidarium, or cold bath,—and an Unctuarium, or room for perfuming and anointing the body with oil,—and through the whole process of these baths and anointings, it is pretended each bather generally passed. There was, besides, a large open Natatio, or swimming bath, the only one which enjoyed the light of heaven, all the rest being perfectly dark.

The water was heated by means of a large hypocaustum, or stove.

A bell was rung at a stated hour in the evening,

to signify that the water was warm, and the baths ready.* Those who used them at any other hour could have cold water only.

It appears that the two sexes usually bathed together, although the practice was prohibited by Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, and several of the Emperors. Even the dissolute Agrippina, the mother of Nero, was so much scandalized at the practice, that she built baths expressly for the use of women on the Viminal Hill.

Above this outer square of the baths, there is supposed to have been a terrace, or gallery, from whence the spectators could view, as from a theatre, the sports and diversions in the Palestrum, or Gymnasium, the walks, (Ambulæra,) &c. &c. which filled the intermediate open space (B) between them and the interior building.

I had understood, that the whole outer subterranean storey, in which were the range of baths, was buried under ground, and no remains of it to be seen; and great was my delight to find several small apartments with no light but what broke in at the door, and containing what, in my innocence, I took to be baths full of cold pellucid water. Never doubting that this was a frigidarium, I hastened to impart my satisfaction to an antiquary of our party, who nearly went distracted at this most heterodox idea. He declared with much discomposure, that

* To this Martial alludes:

Redde pilam—sonatæs thermarum; ludere pergis?
Martial, l. xiv. c. 163.

the water was modern, and that the receptacles containing this modern water—which he would upon no account allow to be denominated baths, though we could devise no other name for them—were modern also; and that the buildings—were not modern, but had been places for the guards, slaves, officers,—for any thing, or any body, but baths and bathers.

If I had had any idea it would have irritated him so much, I never would have mentioned it, for he did not recover his temper during the rest of the day, and still continued to repeat to himself at intervals, "L'acqua è moderna."

The Baths of Antoninus Caracalla were finished by Heliogabalus and Alexander Severus, whose name they sometimes have borne.

It is surprising to me, that the antiquaries have never begun to disputé whether these Thermæ may not be those of Commodus, who did build baths on the Via Appia, though their site is unknown. At all events, the name of Thermæ Antoninianæ, by which these are distinguished, would suit either Emperor equally well.

The beautiful statues which now adorn Naples, the Farnesian Bull, the Hercules, the Flora, and the Callypygian Venus, were found here. Caracalla pillaged Hadrian's villa to adorn his baths, and probably these master-pieces of sculpture had been taken from thence.

The Piscina Publica is supposed to have been in this neighbourhood. Its name implies, that it was a public reservoir of water. It is heard of at

a very early period of Roman history, and is generally believed (by the antiquaries) to have been used for the purpose of swimming in. Yet, while they tell you this, with their usual consistency they assure you, that till the time of Augustus the Romans had no other bath than the Tiber.

LETTER XXX.

THE THERMÆ OF TITUS.—HOUSE OF MECÆNAS.—ANCIENT PAINTINGS.—ARABESQUES.—RAPHAEL.—LAOCOON.—CHURCH OF S. S. MARTINO E SYLVESTRO.—POUSSIN'S PAINTINGS.—SUBTERRANEAN CHURCH.—MASSES AND MARTYRDOMS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.—CARMELITE MONKS.—SETTE SALLE.

THE antiquaries, for the most part, seem agreed that the Thermæ of Titus differed from those of Caracalla and Diocletian in having a subterranean storey beneath its internal part, which contained the baths, and which, instead of being built like the others, in the form of an oblong square, was oval or circular, and that the ruins which remain are of this part.

To me, I own, it seems somewhat doubtful whether these baths ever had any external part—for which I can find no space—or were built according to the same plan as the later ones; or even whether there was any distinction of public and private baths in them, as is pretended; for Suetonius ex-

pressly tells us, that "Titus admitted the common people into his baths, even when he used them himself." Be this as it may, it is certain that the Baths of Titus, though open to the public, were attached to his own palace; some vestiges of which, or possibly of the upper story of the baths, are still pointed out in a vineyard above the Palombari, or gun-powder manufactory. They consist of a broken section of a high semi-circular brick wall, with two rows of large niches, one above another; but what particular purpose the building, of which we see this fragment, may have served in the days of Titus, it would require considerable hardihood now even to hazard a conjecture.

The Thermæ and Palace of Titus were built with the ruins, and on the site of the wide-spreading buildings and pleasure-grounds of Nero's Golden Palace; and they extend from the base of the Esquiline Hill, near the Coliseum, to one of its summits at the Churches of S. S. Martino e Sylvestro, and to another at S. Pietro in Vincoli.

That part of these interesting ruins which has been excavated, is near the Coliseum. We passed the mouths of nine long corridors, as the Italians call them—not that this is a very appropriate term (though I cannot find a better) for long passages converging together like the radii of the segment of a circle, divided from each other by dead walls, covered at the top, and closed at the end. They must always have been dark. They are *supposed* to have been entrances to the Baths, and they are *supposed* to have served as substructions to the

theatres above, which is *supposed* to have formed a part of the upper storey, of which not a trace remains; and the whole of these suppositions have their source in the inflammable imaginations of Roman antiquaries. Nothing is certain about them, excepting that they are not now worth looking at. In one of them are piled up various broken pieces of marble and terra cotta, of amphoræ, and other heterogeneous fragments found in the late excavations by the French, among which were some pots of colours. They were analysed, but nothing new was discovered, and we are still as ignorant as ever as to the cause of the brilliancy and durability of the hues of ancient painting.

Having passed these corridors, we entered the portal of what is called the House of Mecænas, a name so justly dear to every admirer of taste and literature, that we did not feel disposed too scrupulously to question the grounds of the belief, that we actually stood within the walls of that classic habitation, where Horace and Virgil, Ovid and Augustus, must have so often met. In fact, this cannot now admit of any very demonstrative proof; but it is known, that the House of Mecænas stood in this part of the Esquiline Hill, that it survived the conflagration of Nero's reign,* and that, whether spared from convenience, or from respect to the memory of that great patron of arts and litera-

* Tacitus mentions, that the flames were extinguished at the base of the Esquiline Hill.

ture, a part of it was taken by Nero into his buildings, and by Titus into his baths. Antiquaries think they can trace a difference in the brick-work and style of building, between what they consider the erection of Augustus's and of Titus's age; and on these grounds, the parts they point out to you as vestiges of the House of Mecænas, are, the entrance I have already named, which leads into a range of square roofless chambers, (christened on supposition the Public Baths,) and the wall on the right, in passing through them, which is partially formed of reticulated building, in patches.

From these real or imaginary classic remains, we entered a damp and dark corridor, the ceiling of which is still adorned with some of the most beautiful specimens that now remain of the paintings of antiquity. Their colouring is fast fading away, and their very outline, I should fear, must be obliterated at no very distant period, so extreme is the humidity of the place, and so incessantly does the water-drop fall. By the light of a few trembling tapers elevated on the top of a long bending cane, we saw, at least twenty feet above our heads, paintings in arabesque, executed with a grace, a freedom, a correctness of design, and a masterly command of pencil, that awakened our highest admiration, in spite of all the disadvantages under which they were viewed. Insensible of the penetrating damps and chilling cold, we continued to stretch our necks with admiring the Faun, the Nymph, the Bacchante, the Mercury, the Loves and Graces, the twining flowers and fantastic

groupes of gay imagery, which the classic imagination of the Roman painter had assembled seventeen centuries ago.

To Raphael these exquisite figures were a school of art. He transfused much of their soul and spirit into his own compositions, but made no slavish copy of them. The senseless assertion made by the malignity of those who wish to degrade lofty genius to the level of their own grovelling minds, that Raphael sought to conceal these master-pieces of ancient art by causing the excavations to be filled up, and tried to pass off this style of painting as his own, I should have thought too contemptible for notice, but for your observations on the subject.

Not a shadow of proof can be brought in support of the calumny, but there is abundant evidence of its falsehood. For, besides, that arabesques are described by Vitruvius, whose works were in the hands of Raphael, as well as of every other architect of his day, and that it can scarcely be supposed he would lay claim to the invention when the whole body of his rivals could prove its antiquity; and, besides, that the corridors of Hadrian's villa, painted in arabesque, have been open to public inspection even from the days of that emperor; every one who has any acquaintance with the history of art must be aware, that these identical arabesques were never concealed, never filled up—but were openly studied, as well by Raphael's scholars and contemporaries as by himself. To take at random the first instance of their notoriety that occurs to

my memory, Benvenuto Cellini, in his Memoirs, casually alludes to these paintings in Titus's baths as universally known, and as the avowed source from which Raphael had taken the idea of the designs with which he had recently adorned the Vatican. A thousand other instances might be adduced, if it could be necessary to confute what has not a shadow of proof.

A moral confutation, not less convincing, I need scarcely mention, that a being possessed of the generous spirit, the great mind, and the high conscious powers of unequalled genius of Raphael, could not be guilty of an act of such mean littleness and shameful disingenuousness.

There seems to be something in the works of the ancients, in their poetry, their eloquence, their sculpture, their architecture, and even in that most fragile of the fine arts, their painting, that was imperishable in its nature. Raphael's arabesques in the Vatican have suffered nearly as much in three centuries as these have done in seventeen.

I have been accused of valuing them on account of their antiquity, and it is true. That antiquity has an unspeakable charm for me; and I own, I admire them not only because they are beautiful, but because they are ancient.

How often, as I have gazed upon the exquisite arabesques of these ruins, or on the paintings taken from the walls of Pompeii, with increasing interest and admiration; has the sense of their unimpaired outline, their brilliancy and harmony of colouring, and the long succession of ages that have rolled

away since those living forms and tints were hastily impressed on the wall; given me a delight that no production of yesterday, however perfect, could have awakened!

Of their merit, distinct from such feelings, I am not perhaps an unprejudiced or a competent judge. But the truth, the freedom, the correctness of design, the exquisite grace of attitude, and the felicity of fancy that breathe from every specimen of the paintings of the ancients, must charm every eye, and are such as might be expected from the perfection of their sculpture, and the purity of their taste.

The few designs of landscapes I have seen, however—one of which was excavated before my eyes in a house at Pompeii—are strangely inferior to their historical paintings, and are in fact beneath criticism; total violation of the laws of perspective, whether proceeding from ignorance or inattention, having produced total failure. They are scarcely one degree elevated above the drawing on a china plate.

But we ought, in estimating the merits of ancient painting, to remember, that the specimens of it we possess are probably not of the first order. Arabesques that covered an immense extent of rooms and passages, ought rather to be regarded as intended collectively for general ornamental effect, than as productions of individual excellence.

Arabesque paintings, we know, were designed as architectural or furnishing decorations, and as such were condemned by Vitruvius; and even if we

should admit the violent improbability, that the greatest masters of the art had exerted their skill in embellishing the humble dwellings of a distant sea-port like Pompeii, or the acres of buildings that composed the Thermæ of Titus, it is impossible, that on the small scale and restricted plan of this class of paintings, their great powers should appear to advantage. What should we have thought of Raphael had he left behind him nothing but his arabesques? How do they fade before the immortal frescos of his Camere!

These very frescos may be cited as a proof, that as the greatest masters of modern times did not disdain to embellish the walls of a papal palace, the first among the ancients would exert their skill to decorate the Thermæ of a Roman Emperor. But the immense extent of the Baths of Titus, and the shortness of the period in which they were finished,* are conclusive proofs that they could not have been solely executed by the labours of one or two of superior genius. A multitude of artists must have been employed; and that the works of no pre-eminent master has escaped in the few relics which remain, I argue from the general equality that runs through the whole.

The finest painting that has been found in the Baths of Titus, is the famous Nozze Aldobrandini,†

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* Suetonius particularly mentions the remarkable expedition with which they were built.

† So called from the Aldobrandini Gallery, to which it ori-

whose classic beauty of design, composition, and expression, which were adequate to form the genius of a Poussin, do not require my feeble praise. Yet one other painting, which still remains in the corridor of these baths, representing a groupe of figures designed with exquisite skill; and many of those taken from Herculaneum and Pompeii, are of scarcely inferior excellence; and I therefore conclude, that they are all the work of artists of mediocrity—that they prove a certain degree of perfection in the art, and a correct knowledge of its most important principles, to have been very generally diffused—and that the best works of the first masters must have been of very high superiority; for if an undistinguished artist painted these, what must have been the perfection of the works of an Apelles or a Zeuxis?

There are, however, two capital defects observable in all the specimens of ancient painting which have come down to our time. First, the faults in perspective—all the figures, like a basso relievo painted, being represented, as it were, on the same plain; and, secondly, the want of lights, and the consequent absence of all the effects of light and shadow, and all the magic of chiaro oscuro, on the scientific management of which so much of the effect of modern painting depends.

We must suppose these principles of the art to have been unknown, even to the greatest artists,

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ginally belonged. It is now to be seen at the house of Signore Nelli. 152 Corso.

otherwise some marks of them would be visible, even in the works of the meanest; and yet, if I remember right, Vitruvius, in his seventh book, mentions a treatise on perspective, written by Anaxagoras and—somebody else.

The Romans, in the fine arts, were only the pupils and copyists of the Greeks; and to the last, the latter preserved their superiority over the enslavers of their country.

But this long disquisition on ancient painting must have been insupportably wearisome to you, and it is certainly doubly hard to hear so much of it when you can see nothing.

Leaving the painted corridor of the baths of Titus, which is adorned with these beautiful specimens of ancient art, we entered halls, which, like it, must always have been dark,* but are still magnificent. The bright colouring of the crimson stucco, the alcove still adorned with gilding, and the ceilings beautifully painted with fantastic designs, still remain in many parts of them; but how chill, how damp, how desolate are now these gloomy halls of imperial luxury! No sound is to be heard through them but that of the slow water-drop. Certainly the ideas of pleasure in different ages

* This corridor has had a glimmering artificial ray of borrowed light from the upper story, admitted through square apertures in the painted ceiling, which were probably covered with a grate. I suspect, however, that they were merely intended for the purpose of ventilation, since the feeble ray that entered here, could scarcely serve even to render "darkness visible."

have been of very opposite descriptions. Who would, at this day, from choice, bury themselves in subterranean dungeons, or exchange all the splendour of the sun, the free air and common sky, for the red and dusky glare of stifling torches? Yet, what is now considered a punishment too great even for criminals, was then the chosen enjoyment of luxurious Romans; and the poorest inhabitant of Britain would not exchange his cheerful cottage, for the dark magnificence of the imperial palace of the Master of the World.

Yet, the uniform temperature obtained by the exclusion of light and air, the coolness in summer, and warmth in winter, may have sufficiently compensated for the want of those blessings; and, indeed, we ought to remember, that as the Baths were chiefly frequented at night, the admission of light, as in our theatres, was unnecessary, and they may have had means of ventilation which we cannot now trace. We are certainly wholly inadequate judges of what the Thermæ were in their days of splendour; but as they appear to us now, they offer little adapted to modern ideas of enjoyment.

In one of the splendid dungeons of Titus's Baths —thirty-six of which have now been opened—we saw the remains of a bath, supposed to have been for the private use of the Emperor. In another we were shown the crimson painted alcove where the Laocoon was found.*

* Nardini says it was found in a vineyard near the Palombara, but Winkelman exposes his mistake, [illegible]oves that it

It was discovered in the time of Leo the Tenth, at which period the rubbish which filled these baths was so thoroughly sifted, that I should fear there is little probability that any such prize remains to reward the labours of future adventurers. The French, who cleared out a great many of these chambers, found nothing but the Pluto and Cerberus, now in the Capitol, a work of very indifferent sculpture.

Still, as it is well known that the finest statues were placed in the Baths, either because they were the favourite retreats of imperial luxury and pleasure, or because they appeared to most advantage by the light of torches, the only ray that penetrated their darkness; and as, if report say true, whole miles of these Thermæ remain unexplored, many hidden treasures of sculpture may yet be discovered.

On leaving these ruins, we observed, close to the reputed House of Mecænas, some broken down

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was discovered in this precise spot. Its discovery is recorded on the tomb of its discoverer, in the Church of Ara Cæli, as "his praise in death." It appears, therefore, that this part of the ruins belonged to the Palace of Titus, in which Pliny tells us it stood in his time. It is satisfactory to have a new proof that this is the identical master-piece of Grecian sculpture which he extolled. Yet, though answering in style, in age, in perfection, and even in its exact local situation to that description, it has, by the unaccountable perversity of some antiquaries, been pronounced a copy, not the original; an opinion which seems to me so wholly unsupported by probability or ev[illegible] that I shall not stop to notice it.

brick walls, and a most hideous washed out Madonna, which belonged to a church or chapel that once stood here.

From hence we went to the Church of S. S. Martino and Sylvestro, which is also built on the ruins of the Baths of Titus, though at least half a mile from the part we had been examining.

The interior of this Church struck me as one of the most chaste and beautiful in Rome. The platform and tribune, where the high altar is raised above the Confession, or tomb of the Saints, surrounded by the richest pavement of inlaid marbles, has a most striking effect. The naves are formed by a double range of ancient columns of beautiful marble. But these spoils of Ancient Rome are treated like the victims on the bed of Procrustes. If too long, they are cut down,—if too short, they are extended; and these having been in the latter predicament, are stuck on pedestals of the most dwarfish disproportion; and pedestals, even when formed *selon les règles*, I always entertained a most Anti-Palladian aversion to. This I cannot allow to be a proof of want of taste, since I find, to my great satisfaction, no pedestals used in any of the ancient buildings of Greece or Rome; and Palladio, with all his churches and palaces, will never rival the Pantheon, or the Parthenon. To solitary pillars, of course, pedestals are indispensible, but in buildings, how beautiful it is to see the glorious unity of the colonnade springing from the earth, and not propped up on stilts!

The most attractive sight in the [illegible] to us,

was a series of landscapes by Gasper Poussin, which are unquestionably beautiful compositions, but rapidly executed, with no depth, no effect, evidently done before his genius had reached maturity.

Our examination of them was interrupted by the arrival of a lay-brother, with tapers and keys to guide us to the crypt below the church, which anciently formed a part of the Baths of Titus, and is said to have been converted into a place of worship by St Sylvester I. during the persecutions against the Christians.

Under his auspices also, the first General Council was held in this dismal dungeon, after the conversion of Constantine.

There was something in the deep obscurity and unbroken silence of the place, that impressed a feeling of awe and melancholy on the mind. We stood before the plain and simple altar of the early Christians, where the incense of prayer and supplication had been offered up in solemn secrecy. We dimly saw around us the forgotten tombs of princes and abbots mouldering in obscurity. The flickering glare of the taper fell on the discoloured red hat of a Cardinal, suspended above his monument, and dropping into dust, like the bones of him that slept below. "Vanity of vanities," it seemed to say, "all is vanity."

We trod on a fragment of the ancient black and white mosaic pavement of the Thermæ of Titus, and mingled, as it was, with that of later ages, it recalled to us the time when this flinty floor "that holy knee had worn," had resounded to the tread

of the proud masters of the world. As we ranged through these damp and silent chambers, which, after being the alternate scene of imperial luxury, and of humble piety, were now abandoned to the repose of the dead—the voices of the Carmelite monks in the choir above, chaunting the evening service, reached our ear through these echoing vaults, in a full and prolonged swell. These solemn sounds of praise, thus raised to God by the unseen inhabitants of the cloister,—men who had voluntarily abjured the hopes and pleasures of life, to devote themselves to heaven,—breathed the sublime spirit of devotion; and, joined to the deep gloom of the place,—its wide extent,—its remote antiquity,—and the tombs of the dead dimly visible around us,—touched our hearts with emotions not born of this world. Under their influence we lingered till the strain ceased; we returned to the upper church; the spell of feeling was broken, and Reason resumed her empire.

She immediately began to make her enquiries; and being, like most of her sex, a lady of an inquisitive turn; begged to know, how it happened that old St Sylvester, or any other Saint, chose one of the Thermæ, the most public places in Rome, and the most frequented by the idle and dissolute Pagans, to perform the forbidden rites, and hold the secret meetings of the early Christians?

Nor could it, she said, be pretended, that these Thermæ were deserted at that period, (the end of the third century,) when even the Christians were rebuked for resorting to them even in the sixth.

Moreover, she was confounded by the sight of long lists of martyrdoms, which, if the legend and its date be true, must have happened in the reign of Constantine; and she asked if the Christians were tortured by the very same Emperor who established Christianity?

But Reason in vain proposed her questions and remarks. She got no satisfaction from the monks. They continued in the same tone to assert, that in "tempi antichi," St Sylvester, and all the rest of the Christians, were persecuted, and had their church here; that in "tempi antichi" these were Titus's Baths; in "tempi antichi" the first Council was held here under Constantine; and in "tempi antichi" the Saints were martyred here; but all past times and events were jumbled by them into one general "tempi antichi."

It was impossible to make them attend to dates or circumstances, to observe their own contradictions, or allow the most notorious facts of history. They paused with a stupid gaze of astonishment; and for all reply, began again with "tempi antichi."

But even with this cogent argument, nothing they could say of the merits and miracles of St Sylvester,—nor even the sight of the very chair he had sat in,—nor his picture on the wall,—nor the relics of the martyrs,—nor the instruments of their martyrdom,—consisting of heavy Roman weights, said to have been suspended round their Christian necks,—nor the recital of all the tortures they underwent with these most uncomfortable necklaces,

—nor any thing else,—could convince me, that, before the establishment of Christianity, old St Sylvester was such a fool as to say mass in the Baths of Titus, or that the Romans were civil enough to allow him; or that after it, this long string of saints were put to death for being Christians.

I did not leave the Church of the Saints Martin and Sylvester, without forming a fervent wish, that the monks of this Convent, and of every other in Rome, were enjoined, by way of a wholesome penance for the good of their souls—and bodies,—to dig for a certain number of hours every day at the ruins of Rome; which, besides being a great advantage to themselves, might bring to light unsuspected treasures of art. While speculating upon this, and all the other clever things I would do if I were Pope, we arrived at the Sette Salle, a ruin which stands in another part of the Esquiline Hill, in a lonely vineyard near the Palombara, and those remains of the upper story of the Thermæ, or Palace of Titus, that I mentioned before.

These seven halls are better than they promise, for they proved to be nine, and an equal number, it is said, are beneath them, which makes eighteen. They have evidently been immense reservoirs of water, not only for the use of the Baths of Titus, which could not require so enormous a supply, but likewise to fill at pleasure the immense arena of the Coliseum, which was occasionally used for a Naumachia, as well as an Amphitheatre. If a doubt could remain of their destination, which their form and structure sufficiently explain, it might

be observed, that the tartareous deposit, which has penetrated the stucco,—the same that is found in the channels of many of the aqueducts, and to this day is left in the bed of the Anio,—is a decisive proof that these buildings must have contained water. It is precisely similar to the substance found on the walls of the great reservoir,—the Piscina Mirabile at Baiæ,—and, like that, polishes into a sort of marble.

These halls are diagonally pierced with apertures communicating with each other, so that, standing at the most remote, you see the long diagonal line of the whole in beautiful perspective.

I forgot to say, that Trajan finished or enlarged the Baths of Titus, in consequence of which, they have been called Thermæ Trajanæ; and they were afterwards repaired and embellished by Hadrian, and have also borne his name.

LETTER XXXI.

THERMÆ OF DIOCLETIAN—ROTONDO, OR CHURCH OF S. BERNARDO—GYMNASTIC THEATRE—GREAT COVERED HALL OF THE BATHS, OR CHURCH OF THE CARTHUSIANS—DOMENICHINO'S FRESCO OF ST SEBASTIAN—TOMB OF SALVATOR ROSA, AND CARLO MARATTI—BIANCHINI'S MERIDIAN—CARTHUSIAN MONKS—VILLA MASSIMA—BIBLIOTHECA ULPIA—THE EIGHTY THOUSAND MARTYRS—DIOCLETIAN—THERMÆ OF CONSTANTINE—RUIN OF THE THERMÆ.

We drove this morning to the Baths of Diocletian, which are scattered over the summit of the Quirinal and Viminal Hill, and which in extent, as well as splendour, are said to have surpassed all the Thermæ of Ancient Rome.

Though they do not stand in the same imposing loneliness of situation as those of Caracalla, the wide space of vacant and grass-grown ground over which their ruins may be traced, tells a melancholy tale of departed magnificence.

The Thermæ of Diocletian were finished by Maximinian. They have, apparently, been built in the form of an immense oblong square, with a circular hall, according to some accounts, at all the four corners, but more probably at two only, and these are still standing. One of them, which is much dilapidated, has been converted into a granary, and the other owes its preservation to the piety of an old Countess, who, some centuries back, transformed it into the Church of San Bernardo, and endowed the convent to which it belongs.

It has been said by some antiquaries, that this hall was anciently a Caldarium, or Tepidarium. I would by no means presume to contradict any thing they say, but, in this instance, they contradict themselves; for if, as they pretend, *all* the baths were always in the subterranean story, then these halls could not have been baths, because they were in the upper. Setting this aside, if by a Caldarium, or Tepidarium, it is meant that each of these lofty halls was a sort of huge cauldron, or great bath, in which the people bathed sociably all together, with a little water at the bottom, and a great air-hole at the top,—where, I would ask, were the means of heating or filling them? One of them is in perfect preservation, and yet no tubes, channels, or other conveyance for water, such as we see in the ruins of all ancient baths, have ever been found in the walls or the pavement; in the roof above, or the earth beneath them. If we are to suppose that they were filled with a variety of little baths, the difficulty is still the same,—how were they filled or heated?

If, however, they were not baths, I see still less reason to imagine that they were temples, which they have been sometimes called. They bear no appearance of ever having had that indispensible part of temples—a portico; nor can I find any authority for the old belief,—now, I think, nearly exploded,—that any of the Thermæ ever contained temples; or see, in any part of their wide-spread ruins, the vestiges of any building bearing any resemblance to them.

It seems most probable that the circular halls in question were neither baths nor temples, but belonged to that part of the Thermæ which was devoted to purposes of amusement, though what may have been their peculiar destination, it would be vain now to enquire.

Into that ancient hall, which now serves the worthy purpose of a granary, we could get no admittance; but the other, the Church of St Bernard, into which we at last effected an entrance, is really a noble building, and the light pouring in through the top of the lofty dome, accorded well with the stillness and silence that reigned through it, and with the figure of the only human being it contained—an old monk, who was kneeling before the altar of his patron saint. Perhaps he was imploring the image to grant him patience, for we had disturbed him from his siesta to admit us,—having come to the gate while the holy fathers were indulging, as usual, in a comfortable nap after the labours of their noonday repast,—and long and loudly had we rung before we succeeded in awa-

kening this one unwilling monk—for a monk he was; I had affronted him extremely by taking him for a lay brother.

We asked him to shew us some remains of the baths which are still to be seen in the garden of his convent, but neither entreaty, importunity, nor bribery, could prevail on him to let us see them; none of the female sex, it seems, being ever admitted among their cabbages.

Our despair, however, at this refusal, was afterwards assuaged when we found another entrance into an adjoining garden opposite the Church of Santa Maria de' Angeli, which equally gave us access to the ruins we wished to see.

This garden evidently occupies the arena of a Gymnasium, Palestrum, or some theatre which, from its form and structure, has served for pentathlic games. It is surrounded by a semi-circular portico, the central part of which has apparently been the seat, or Suggestus, of the Emperor. By the monks it has been converted into a small Oratorio, or chapel, but it is now falling into ruin. In another part of this portico, a humble, but decent dwelling, has been formed, the mistress of which invited us to enter, and accepted our acknowledgments with the "Padrone!" and the peculiarly-winning smile and gesture with which the Roman females pronounce this courteous word. Having ascended her narrow staircase, we walked along the raised terrace of this portico, but saw nothing to admire except the orange-trees, whose mingled flowers and fruit were flourishing within it.

The Xystum, Pinacotheca, or great covered hall of the Thermæ, which seems to stand in the centre, was converted into the Church of Santa Maria de' Angeli, by M. A. Buonarotti, but it has been considerably altered, and perhaps not for the better, by succeeding architects. The entrance to it is now at the side instead of the end, through a circular vestibule, lighted from the top, and similar in form to the Church of San Bernardo. After all the changes that have been made, however, this noble hall retains much of its original form and beauty. Perhaps, indeed, it owes its grandeur of effect as well to magnitude as to design, and I will not deny that its architecture may be chargeable with heaviness; but although it was built at a period when the arts, and their parent taste had greatly declined from their full perfection, it is one of the most perfect and beautiful remains of antiquity that Rome can boast, and one which it is impossible to behold without admiration.

You stand in a hall three hundred and fifty feet in length, and ninety in height, the uniformity of the form of which is varied by the circular hall of entrance opening to it in the centre of one side, and a deep recess, or rather oblong chamber, on the other, in which stands the high altar.

The vaulted roof, still studded with the metallic circles to which the lamps were suspended, is supported by sixteen noble Corinthian columns, eight of which only are ancient, and are of Egyptian granite; the rest are painted so ingeniously in imitation of them, that, at a little distance, to the eye

they produce complete uniformity. The proportions of the columns, as well as of the hall, were injured by raising the pavement above the ancient level, which was done by Michael Angelo, to guard against the humidity of the ground. Would it not have been better to have dug it out to a sufficient depth?

This noble church is adorned with a variety of paintings, none of which, however, excited my admiration, except the martyrdom of St Sebastian, painted in fresco, by Domenichino, in St Peter's,—where the mosaic copy now supplies its place,—and afterwards brought here. The composition is too crowded and confused, but every figure is a study that might form a painter. It is marked throughout with the boldness of conception, the force, the originality, and the deep pathos of his vigorous and expressive pencil. The dying resignation of the suffering saint—the agonizing despair of his friends —the hardened indifference of the brutal executioners—above all, the beauty and smiling innocence of the children hanging by their affrighted mother, contrasted with the dark ferocity of the Roman commanders, are indeed worthy of that lofty genius which bowed only to the supremacy of Raphael.

Who can turn from this to the feebleness of Carlo Maratti, on the opposite wall!

Not only the works, but the tomb of that artist stand in this church, and we contemplated it with the respect due to merit, which, however inferior to those which had gone before, at least surpassed any

that has since visited the world. The Monument of Salvator Rosa, opposite, awakened far deeper interest; and the inscription, which reminded us, that genius, whose early promise was prematurely blighted and cut off by dark and unresisted passions, slept below; drew a sigh from many a bosom that gathered round to view it.

On the pavement of this church, a meridian was traced in the year 1701, by Bianchini, the antiquary. I followed its sloping line with great shew of wisdom, looked up at the solar ray which enters through a small puncture in the roof, and was perfectly satisfied that it might be one of the most perfect meridians that ever was traced; but it is equally certain, that if it had been one of the worst, I never should have found it out; for the fact is, I know nothing of the matter. If, however, you should wish for a full and particular account of this meridian, I should suppose you would find it in a folio description of it published in Rome, the dimensions of which were the only part I examined.

This church belongs to the Certosa, or Convent of Carthusians, who are of the same order as the Chartreuse, excepting that their rules are less rigid in Italy than in France. We seemed destined today to disturb the peace of Cloisters, for having been informed that some remains of the Thermæ were enclosed within the court of the Convent, and knowing by experience the inefficacy of solicitations for admittance, we walked through the forbidden gateway, and proceeded straight onwards to

the objects of our curiosity, taking care not to hear the warning voice of a monk, who pursued us as fast as was consistent with his dignity, calling to us, in a voice of horror, to stop. In a rage at finding us deaf to his cries, he had recourse to the great Convent bell, on which he rung so loud an alarum, that the whole community ran out in the utmost consternation. They dispatched one of their body in solemn deputation, to represent to us the enormity of our offence; but not even his threats of excommunication in this world, and something worse in the next, had any effect upon our hardened souls. To please them, however, we finished as quickly as possible our survey of the ruins which had been the sole cause of our irruption here, (and which seemed to have formed part of a portico,) and assuring him we had no evil intention upon the good fathers, and had not so much as the least wish to see them—but that, since they had chosen to take up their abode among the ruins of Rome, they must lay their account with having occasional visits from ladies, who had come from the other extremity of Europe to see them—we took our departure, and quietness was restored within the Convent. They took care to shut the gates behind us; verifying the proverb, of barring the stable-door when the steed is stolen.

Thus, these halls that were built for Pagan indulgence, are now converted into the scene of monastic austerity. The monks of St Bernard, and the Carthusians, divide between them the ruins of

the splendid Thermæ of Diocletian, for its sole remains are comprehended in the two churches,* the granary, and the ruined theatre already mentioned, in their garden.

There are, indeed, some other inconsiderable scattered vestiges: One day, in wandering about these ruins, I came to a building, once perhaps a magnificent hall, but now the miserable dwelling of a muleteer, whose large family of mules and children were all comfortably accommodated together beneath its lofty roof.

The Villa Massimi, and its spacious gardens, occupy a part of the site of these Thermæ; it is in the state of reckless neglect, dirt, and disrepair, so common in Italian houses, and is wholly unfurnished and abandoned. It once possessed a valuable collection of ancient statues and bas reliefs, and even of Roman paintings, found in the excavations made here; but I understand they passed into the possession of the late Lord Bristol, so well known for his eccentricity and passion for the arts.

The Bibliotica Ulpia was brought to these Thermæ by Diocletian, from the Forum of Trajan. Above three thousand bagni ruole, or bathing vessels, each hewn out of one immense block of the most costly Grecian marble, or Oriental granite, adorned these baths. Some of them are preserved in the Museum of the Vatican.

* The famous Hermaphrodite was found behind the Church of St Maria de' Angeli, in the grounds of these Carthusians.

I cannot quit the churches which now occupy the site and the ruins of the Thermæ of Diocletian, without observing that the memory of the forty, or eighty thousand martyrs, who, as varying monkish legends credibly inform us, were massacred at these Baths in recompense for having built them, is still held in deserved veneration here. It seems strange, however, that more respect was not paid to their labours by the sacrilegious Pope who pulled down a considerable part of the buildings thus sacrificed with their blood.

It may seem somewhat improbable that the mild, the enlightened, the philosophic Emperor, whose name they bear, should, in the short and single visit* he ever paid to Rome, amuse himself with the deliberate massacre of either forty, or eighty, thousand of his subjects. The enormous amount, as well as contradictory statement of the numbers, is an ample refutation of a preposterous accusation, unsupported by any admissible evidence. But while we acquit him of such exterminating barbarity, we are compelled to acknowledge, that, however little consonant to his character, the stain of persecution is indelibly affixed to the memory of Diocletian. When, after a reign of twenty-one years of glory and of virtue, he entered Rome, for the first time, to share with his imperial colleague the *last* triumph Rome was ever destined to witness;—when, even in that proud moment, he meditated the abdication of the purple, and needed not the whisper of

* Vide Gibbon. He only staid two months.

the monitor* to remember "he was only a man," the fiery mandate to extirpate Christianity and Christians, was already gone abroad, and for ten succeeding years, that unfortunate sect was pursued with inflexible hostility.

But when a slave, a peasant, and a shepherd† sat in conjunction on the throne of the Cæsars, the opprobrium must at least be divided; and the implacable hostility of his colleagues and successors towards that unfortunate sect, would seem to prove,

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* An attendant was always stationed behind the victor in the triumphal car, to repeat to him, as the proud procession moved along, "Remember thou art a man!" In republican times at least, such was the custom; I do not remember whether it was afterwards preserved, or whether truth was allowed to be whispered into an imperial ear. So, in the moment of his exaltation to the chair of St Peter, the herald, even now, lights the smoking flax, and as it consumes away, exclaims to the spiritual monarch of the world, the earthly king of kings, "Sancte Pater! Sic transit gloria mundi."

† Diocletian, Maximinian, and Galerius. Diocletian was the son of a Dalmatian slave; Maximinian, a Pannonian peasant, who served as a common soldier; Galerius, a Dacian shepherd, or cow-herd. The latter, however, like Constantius Chlorus, who was then employed in subduing Carausius, the Roman usurper, in Britain, was Cæsar only, not Emperor; but his influence was thought to have been chiefly instrumental in first causing the persecution against the Christians, and carrying it on after the abdication of Diocletian, when Maximinian had elevated him and his above-named mild and merciful colleague, to supreme power. So foreign was persecution to the nature of Constantine, that, on his death-bed, at York, he recommended the Christians to the special protection of his son and successor, by whom their faith was to be soon established.

that the long years of perfect toleration they had enjoyed during the whole of his preceding reign, might be more certainly imputed to his mildness and moderation, than the edict of persecution which disgraced its close to his cruelty. That mandate was extorted by the long-continued importunity, perhaps misrepresentation, of his colleagues, from a body enfeebled by disease, and a mind harassed with the cares and vexations of empire.

From the works of the persecutor, we must turn to those of the protector of Christianity—from Diocletian to Constantine. Both built baths; but with all my passion for antiquities, I could never find much satisfaction in groping amongst the old battered brick walls in the Colonna Gardens, which constitute the sole remains of the Thermæ of the latter Emperor. An antiquary, who in an evil hour once laid hold of me in this place, demonstrated to me, with much learning and length, that these aforesaid Thermæ differed from every other, in having had three stories, which I was quite willing to believe, in order to get away from him. I moreover saw an ugly piece of coarse mosaic; and I did *not* see sixteen ancient paintings taken from these Baths, and formerly in the Palazza Rospigliosi, but which are there no longer. I also heard a great deal about the two Colossal Groupes of Castor and Pollux, now on Monte Cavallo, which were found here, and of which I suspect you have heard enough, or too much, already.*

* Vide Letter XIX.

We have now finished our hasty survey of the few vestiges that remain of the magnificent Thermæ of Ancient Rome. All that was valuable—all that was splendid in them—has been long since torn away by the rapacity of foreign and domestic plunderers. Their gold, their silver, their ivory, and their bronze, might be carried off by the Goth or the Vandal; but their marble columns were dragged away, their mosaic pavements torn up, their embossed and gilded roofs broken down, and their very brick walls destroyed by the worst of barbarians—the modern Romans. These walls, broken as they are, now constitute their sole ruins. From them we can form no idea of what they once were, and the glories of the Thermæ are but feebly remembered, even in the dull detail of historical description

It would be vain to go through the long and unprofitable catalogue of all those splendid Thermæ which adorned Ancient Rome, when their very walls, which have served as quarries, have long since been exhausted, and even their site has become dubious.

In the fourth century, they are known to have stood in all their original magnificence; and their destruction does not seem to have commenced for nearly two hundred years afterwards. The early Christians discouraged their disciples from frequenting these baths—not as a cynical friend of mine observed, because the Catholic predilection for dirt existed even in the days of the fathers—but because they were places of licentiousness and

morality; a charge which we have every reason to believe was true, in its fullest extent.

They were not, however, deserted until the destruction of the Aqueducts, by Vitiges, or Totila, in the sixth century, had deprived them of their element of life; when, like body without a soul, they decayed away.

LETTER XXXII.

BRIDGES.—THE ANCIENT AND MODERN BRIDGES OF ROME.—BRIDGES OVER THE ANIO.—PONTE LAMENTANO.—THE SACRED MOUNT, AND THE TWO RETREATS OF THE ROMAN PEOPLE TO IT.—MENENIUS AGRIPPA.—VLLA OF PHAONTES, THE SCENE OF THE DEATH OF NERO.—PONTA SALARA.—COMBAT OF TORQUATUS WITH THE GAUL.—HANNIBAL'S CAMP.—BRIDGES OF ANCIENT ROME, OF ENGLAND, &c.

THE first, and for a long time the only bridge of Rome, was the Pons Sublicius—or Æmilius, as it was afterwards called—built, as its name signifies, of wood, and erected, as Livy informs us, by Ancus Martius. It was here that Horatius Cocles performed those prodigies of valour, which, as that admirable historian observes, "are more easily admired than credited by posterity."*

This bridge was afterwards rebuilt, without nails, to facilitate its destruction, in case of the recurrence of any such emergency. It does not appear

* Livy, l. xxxvi. c. 15.

to have been made of any more solid material than wood, till the time of the Emperors, when Antoninus Pius built it of marble. One solitary fragment of a broken pier, or fallen arch, now lies in the Tiber, between the Aventine and the Ripa Grande, and serves to mark its ancient situation. It is visible only when the water is low.

Annually, on the 15th of May, in the times of the Kings, men were thrown from this bridge into the Tiber, and images of clay were afterwards substituted for them.

In later times, the mangled bodies of Commodus and Heliogabalus were ignominiously hurled from it.

This bridge was the great station of the beggars, who used to sit there asking charity.*

The Palatine Bridge, (Pons Palatinus,) or, as some of the antiquaries have christened it, Pons Senatorius, at present called the Broken Bridge, (Ponte Rotto,) and in truth no bridge at all, for there is nothing left of it—was the first bridge of stone that was erected at Rome. It was finished by Scipio Africanus and L. Mummius, in their Censorship; the piers had been previously built by two former Censors.†

It was rebuilt for the last time by Gregory the Thirteenth, and finally destroyed in the flood of 1598.

From the spot where it once crossed the Tiber, the embouchure of the Cloaca Maxima is visible,

* Seneca, l. xxv. † Livy, Dec. iv. l. xl. c. 51.

when the water is low, in the bank a little lower down the river.

The branch of the Tiber leading to the Isola Sacra, now the Island of St Bartholomew, was crossed by the Pons Fabricius, so called from an Ædile of that name, who originally built it; but the present bridge is called Ponte de' Quattro Capi, from a Hermes which has been set up upon it, with four faces.

The other branch of the Tiber between the island and Trastevere, was crossed by the Pons Cestius, so called, undoubtedly, from the name of its original founder, though who he was is not very clear. It is now called the Ponte di San Bartolomeo, and bears an inscription which states that it was rebuilt by the Emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian, in the year 375, from whence it was once called the Gratian Bridge.

Both these bridges, which connect the island with the banks of the river, were originally built in the eighth century of Rome.

The original date of the erection of the Pons Janicularis, I believe, is not ascertained, but there are no remains of it. The Ponte Sisto, built by Sixtus Fourth, occupies its ancient situation.

A vestige of the Pons Triumphalis, or what is generally reputed such, is still visible in the Tiber, opposite the hospital of the Spirito Santo. The date of its erection is unknown. The victorious Consuls, to whom the Senate decreed the honour of a triumph, crossed this bridge, followed by their

soldiers, their captives, their trophies, and their spoils; entered the Campus Martius by the Porta Triumphalis, passed the Circus of Flora, the Circus Flaminius, the Theatres of Pompey and Marcellus, the Portico of Octavia, and the Circus Maximus; traversed the course of the Via Triumphalis, which terminated at the base of the Palatine, near the arch of Constantine, and entered the Via Sacra; passed between the Coliseum and the Temple of Venus and Rome, in front of the Temple of Peace, and the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, and, crossing the Roman Forum, ascended to the Temple of Capitolinus.

Scipio, Marius, Sylla, Pompey, Cæsar, Cicero, Augustus, Claudius, Trajan, Aurelius, Severus—how many names of infamy or glory might we not recapitulate of those who have passed here, in the short-lived triumph of man over his fellow-creatures!

The Pons Ælius, so called from Ælius Hadrianus, by whom it was built as a passage to his magnificent tomb, is now transformed into the Ponte San Angelo. The piers and arches are ancient, but have been a good deal repaired; not indeed till it was necessary, for in the Pontificate of Clement VII. when crowds were pressing forwards to St Peter's, to share in the benefits and indulgences offered to the pious there, the bridge gave way, and a hundred and seventy-two people perished in the Tiber.

Clement IX. repaired it more thoroughly, and

to him and Bernini are due the merit of all the saints and angels that are fluttering upon it.

These six bridges of Ancient Rome, (for I count the two which connect the island with the opposite shores of the Tiber as one,) are now reduced to three. These are, 1st, the Bridges of the Island.

2d, The Ponte Sisto; and,

3d, The Ponte San Angelo.

Out of Rome there is only one bridge over the Tiber. It is the Milvian or Æmilian Bridge, built by M. Emilius Scaurus in the seventh century of the Republic, on the Via Flaminia, about two miles from the Porta del Popolo. The present bridge of six arches was rebuilt by Nicholas Fifth nearly on the foundations of the Roman one. Its name is now corrupted into Ponte Molle.

It is famous as the scene of the eventful battle in which Constantine defeated Maxentius, and the previous apparition of the fiery cross in the heavens, in the faith of which he conquered, and which announced his own approaching triumph, and that of Christianity.

That it was really the spot where the battle was fought, is matter of historical fact.

It was here, too, that the ambassadors of the Allobroges were overtaken on their return to their own country, by the vigilance of Cicero, when the treasonable dispatches with which they were charged, furnished proof of the conspiracy of Catiline.

It was here, too, in the dissolute times of the empire, that the Roman youth resorted for the purposes of midnight revelry and debauch; and here,

in the pursuit of these illicit pleasures, the monster Nero once narrowly escaped assassination.*

The Anio, now the Teverone, which flows into the Tiber, is crossed at the distance of a few miles from Rome by three bridges, all of them the work of the low ages; excepting perhaps the Ponte Mammolo, a name supposed to have been a corruption from Mammea, the mother of Alexander Severus, by whom it is reputed to have been built. It is about four miles from Rome, on the road to Tivoli.

The Ponte Lamentano, formerly the Pons Nomentanus, is about three miles from Rome, on the Via Nomentana, which led to the ancient city of that name, as now to the miserable village that occupies its site. It was rebuilt by Narses, having been destroyed in the unceasing conflicts of that bloody period. In the bridge itself there is nothing remarkable; but beyond it rises the broad green height of Monte Sacro, as it is still called—that very Mons Sacer to which the Roman army and people retired from the city when oppressed by the tyranny and exactions of the Patricians, and from whence the rough eloquence of Menenius Agrippa, and his ingenious apologue of the Body and the Members, induced them to return, on being allowed to have magistrates of their own—tribunes of the people, to guard their rights.

They retired to it a second time, when driven into resistance by the tyranny of the Decemvirs,

* Vide Tacitus, Ann. xv. Suetonius in Vita Ner.

after the murder of Virginia by her father; and then only required of the Senate, that the Decemvirs should lay down their illegal authority, that the tribunes of the people should be restored, and that full immunity should be granted to themselves; demands so moderate, that the deputies of the Senate heard them with admiration, and declaring that they were such as they should themselves have offered, immediately conceded them.*

It is something to feel we stand upon the sacred spot where this scene of Roman firmness, and almost philosophical moderation, was twice exhibited,—where an army, flushed with recent conquest, and a people, irritated by long continued oppression, calmly demanded that redress of their wrongs, and security for their liberties, which the most dispassionate umpire must have awarded them, and, guided by the light of reason, asked for justice, and no more.

Fortunately, for once, no doubt intrudes itself on the consciousness that we do indeed stand on this spot. The site of the Monte Sacro seems ascertained beyond the cavils of criticism. Livy mentions, that it was three miles from the city, on the other side of the Anio;† and Dionysius Halicar-

* Venuti asserts, that the second secession of the people to Mons Sacer was terminated by the establishment of Plebeian Ædiles. But this was not a stipulation at the time they laid down their arms, although the office was soon after created.

† Trans Anionem amnem tria ab Vrbe millia passuum. Lib. ii. c. 32.

nassus describes it even more particularly, so that we ascended it in the unwavering faith, that the earth we trod was "holy ground."

The hill that exclusively bears the name of Monte Sacro, is on the right of the road, though that on the opposite side seems also to form a part of it.

A ruined sepulchre stands at the foot of the hill on either side of the road. That on the left, which is larger and in better preservation than the other, is called the tomb of Menenius Agrippa; but this is vague supposition. We know that he died in honourable poverty, and that the expences of his funeral were defrayed by a voluntary assessment of the people.* But history is silent as to the place of his interment.

About a mile farther on this road, a little to the left, from the descriptions of historians, *must* have been the villa of Phaontes, Nero's Freedman, where that monster fled to seek that refuge which the world, so lately his own, could no longer afford him, and where he killed himself to escape the more cruel and ignominious death that was overtaking him.†

The Ponta Salara, about three miles beyond the gate of the same name, is a very singular and picturesque structure. Upon its centre is erected a high tower of defence, beneath which the road passes,

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* Livy, lib. ii. c. 32.

† Suetonius says, Nero fled by the Via Nomentana to the villa of Phaontes, which was between that road and the Via Salara, and about four miles from Rome.

and a small staircase at the side leads up to it. The inscriptions upon it record, that having been destroyed by Totila, it was rebuilt by Narses, and it has apparently stood uninjured from that day.

But its interest takes its rise from an early period of history. On the formidable invasion of the Gauls, when their threatening hosts had advanced even here, and Rome trembled at the impending horrors of a second pillage, this bridge was the scene of the desperate combat fought between the intrepid Manlius and the gigantic Gaul, which terminated in the defeat of the Barbarian, and delivered the Romans from the paralysing dread of their arms, by shewing they were not invincible; for, previous to this, their very name had struck every Roman heart with terror. You must know I have discovered that this great Gaul was dressed in tartan, like our Highlanders; for Livy says, he wore *versi colori veste*, which I can translate by nothing else; and this being the case, you will, I hope, henceforward, have a proper reverence for the high antiquity of the plaid. Well may we look down from our mountains with contempt upon broad cloth and duffle!

But, to return to the combat between this great Gaul and Manlius, at the end of which "the soldiers," says Livy, "burst forth into extempore songs in praise of his valour,—(these extempore songs, by the way, look extremely as if the art of the modern improvisatori was of high antiquity in Italy,)—and hailed him Torquatus, from the torquis, or gold chain or collar, with which his re-

doubtable antagonist was decorated, a name which he and his descendants ever afterwards bore."*

It was very singular that a hero of the same name and family should twice save Rome from the same barbarians; for Manlius Capitolinus was the ancestor of Manlius Torquatus. He was the same Manlius Torquatus who gave such a signal instance of filial duty to his father, and of parental severity to his son. The cruelty of his father towards him had been such as to rouse the indignation of the whole Roman people; and when cited to answer before them for these unheard-of acts of barbarity—and when, from the hatred universally felt against him, his condemnation was certain—young Manlius, surprising his accuser in a secret place, drew his sword upon him, and compelled him to take a solemn oath never to bring forward the charges against his father; and thus left himself without means of redress from his tyranny.†

This indeed was virtue, sublime as it is rare, and worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance; but his conduct to his own son, though dictated by false notions of virtue, can only excite our abhorrence. For no fault but that of disobedience to a general order he had issued to his army not to leave the ranks, he condemned his noble-minded son, who, like himself, had sprung forward to accept the bravadoing challenge of one of the enemy, and gained a glorious victory,—to be beheaded on the spot, and sat unmoved to witness the cruel execution.

* Livy, lib. vii. c. 10. † Ibid.

Such unnatural virtues are even more revolting than natural vices, and no human heart can ever sincerely applaud them.

But to return to the Ponte Salaro:—I think we may conclude, that the ground on the other side of it is that on which Hannibal encamped during the few days he remained before Rome; for though Livy does not mention this bridge, he says the Carthaginian pitched his camp on the Anio, three miles from Rome, and advanced to the Porta Collina, now Salara, which he would naturally do from hence.

But I am telling you old stories out of the Roman history, instead of finishing my account of Roman bridges, which I may do without farther delay, for I cannot recollect that I have any thing more to add about them. I will therefore dismiss them with one general remark, that none of the bridges, or remains of bridges at Rome, can excite any extraordinary admiration. Their architecture is by no means remarkable. The most noble structure of this kind in Italy, is the Pons Narniensis, the ruined bridge of Narni, the work of Augustus. The finest bridge in the world, that of Trajan over the Danube, was destroyed by the mean envy of Hadrian, that great protector of the arts. What it may have been we know not, but, in all that now remain, Italy is outdone by England. The ancient Romans, in this branch of architecture, are excelled by the modern Britons. Nor is there, through the whole of this land of arts, a single bridge, either

ancient or modern, that can vie with the grandeur and beauty of Waterloo-bridge in London.

Neither, in the ingenuity and curious mechanism of our iron bridges, our chain bridges, and all our wonderful fabrications of bridges, did they ever bear the most remote competition with us. They no more dreamt of crossing waters by such machines, than of sailing upon them by steam, or descending into them in a diving bell.

What would the heroes of Salamis and Actium think of a British ship of war, or a whole fleet of such ships? How would the bewildered old philosophers gaze at our carriages, our mail-coaches, our steam-engines, our manufactories, our printing-presses, our telegraphs, our guns, our artillery, our telescopes, and all our innumerable and magical inventions? What would they think of men flying about through the air in balloons, or descending into the bowels of the earth, and the depths of the sea? I am persuaded, that if these ancient worthies could be brought back again, and see all these things going on, they would never believe they were in the same old world they had left.

LETTER XXXIII.

ARCHES.—ARCH OF CLAUDIUS DRUSUS—TRIUMPHAL ARCHES OF TITUS, OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS, AND OF CONSTANTINE—ARCH OF GOLLIENUS—ARCH OF DOLABELLA AND SYLANUS—ARCH OF ST LAZARO—THE DESTROYED ARCHES OF MARCUS AURELIUS, CLAUDIUS, AND GORDIAN.

WITHOUT the limits of the ancient city, and close to the Porta San Sebastiano, stands the Arch of Claudius Drusus Nero, dedicated to him by the Senate, in the year of Rome 745, for his victories over the Rhœti in the reign of Augustus. He was the first who received the title of Germanicus, which his son afterwards so nobly won, and one of the youngest who ever obtained the honour of a triumph. He died in the bloom of youth, and in the rank of a private citizen, though he was the son, the brother, and the father of an Emperor.*

* He was the son of Livia, the step-son of Augustus, the brother of Tiberius, and the father of Claudius. But a greater honour was his, he was the father of Germanicus.

This Arch cannot be classed with the three Triumphal Arches of the Emperors. It boasts, indeed, little of splendour or ornament; but its architecture is noble, and bespeaks that era when the arts trusted for effect to grandeur of design, rather than richness of decoration. It consists of a single arch, and is built of large masses of Tiburtine stone. The two remaining columns of African marble on one of its fronts, are pronounced by connoisseurs to be in a style so inferior to that of the arch, that they must have been added in a later age, probably that of Caracalla, at which period this Arch was forced into the service of an Aqueduct, and served for the conveyance of the Aqua Antoniana to the Thermæ of Caracalla.

In the opinion of many, indeed, it was originally built for this purpose by that Emperor; but, besides that the architecture does not seem to correspond with that period, it is not likely that he would take the trouble to erect another arch over the Via Appia, when he must have found one ready built; I mean the Arch of Drusus, which Suetonius and Tacitus place here, and which I believe this to be. A medal, of Claudius's reign, bearing that arch on its reverse, proves that, like this, it consisted of one arch only.

The Arch of Titus—the most ancient, and perhaps the most faultless, of the Triumphal Arches—was the work of an age when the arts which, in the reign of Domitian, had degenerated from their ancient simplicity, into a style of false and meretricious ornament, had revived, in their fullest purity and

vigour, beneath the patronage of Trajan. But we now see it to great disadvantage. The hand of Time has robbed it of much of its ancient beauty; his "effacing fingers" have obliterated much of the expression and grace, and even outline of the bas reliefs, the design and composition of which we can yet admire. But this beautiful monument, raised by the taste and generosity of one Emperor to the virtues and glory of another, now totters to its fall; and no distant generation may perhaps see even its ruins only in description.

It is the most ancient, and the most perfect model of the composite which Italy or Greece can boast; and, accordingly, modern architecture has received it as the canon of that order, which was probably introduced about this period. In the age of Augustus at least, it was certainly unknown, for Vitruvius does not describe it.

The Arch of Severus is much less beautiful, and more entire. It consists of three arches, one large, and two smaller ones, of Grecian marble, whose smoothness and colour are so completely gone, that the material is now scarcely recognisable. I will spare you any criticism upon it. The heavy and clumsy style of its architecture is sufficiently striking, when viewed beside the noble buildings of the Forum, in which it stands. Indeed, I know few ancient edifices in which the arts have been so completely tortured out of their native graces. The whole building is covered with a confusion of bas reliefs, whose deformity of design and execution is sufficiently evident through all the injuries of time

and accident. The Dacians and the Romans, the victors and the vanquished, are all levelled in equality of ugliness; and nothing can be understood where the artist had not skill enough to tell his story.

The Arch of Constantine, though of a later and a darker period, when the arts had fallen into still deeper degradation, is, I think, by far the most noble of the Triumphal Arches of Rome. Its superiority, no doubt, partly arises from its fine preservation, but chiefly from its pilfered columns, its beautiful sculptured medallions, and bas reliefs, which commemorate the victories of Trajan, and have evidently been torn from one of his Triumphal Arches. But may not the Arch itself, as well as the columns and the sculpture, have been a transplanted, and transformed Arch of Trajan?* I see no other supposition that can account for the striking superiority of its architecture over every other building of the age of Constantine. Its ancient magnificence still stands unimpaired. Eight fluted Corinthian columns of giallo antico marble, support the figures of eight Dacian captives, of Pavonazzetta, or violet-veined marble; and although one column, one Dacian, and all their eight heads are modern, the general effect is scarcely impaired by these restorations. How strikingly does Trajan's exquisitely sculptured Victories contrast with the little, mis-shapen, unintelligible figures on Constantine's frieze! One might mistake them for the first

* Forsyth seems also to lean to this opinion.

rude essays of art, but that they bear not the promise of its infancy. It is apparent that they are the feeble efforts of decay and corruption. Sculpture had then fallen into second childhood, and into the mere oblivion of old age. The Victor, the Triumphal Car, and the Fiery Steeds, no longer hold their appropriate station on the grass-grown platform at the top of this Arch, or on that of Septimius Severus.

In the interior of both are chambers, to which those who have sufficient activity and curiosity may ascend on ladders, for there is no entrance from below. I have already described the Arch of the Porta Maggiore, the Little Arch of Septimius Severus, and the Arch of Janus, in the Forum Boarium; and there is no other arch now existing in Rome which can awaken interest or admiration, though there are some which we must briefly mention.

The Arch of Gallienus—or rather its remains—for the central arch is alone standing, and two small ones, which it is said to have formerly boasted, have disappeared,—is a stone structure of mean architecture, which stands on the Esquiline Hill, near the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore. The inscription records, that it was raised to that Emperor by one of his servile subjects—by a slave to a tyrant. A trophy worthy of it, a chain, to which the keys of Tusculum were once attached, in commemoration of a Roman triumph of the twelfth century, is still suspended upon it.

Near the Church of San Tomaso in Formis, on

the Cœlian Hill, is a plain arch, erected, as its inscription shews, by the Consuls Dolabella and Silanus, in the reign of Augustus, but for what purpose, is unknown. Nero took it into his Aqueduct.

At the base of the Aventine Hill, on the road towards the Porta San Paola, the road passes under a low brick arch, now called Arco di San Lazaro, but popularly believed to have been originally erected to Horatius Cocles, in honour of his memorable single-handed combat with the Etruscan army, near the adjacent Pons Sublicius. But Livy, who relates that the Commonwealth awarded him as much ground as he could encircle with a plough, and the honour of a statue in the Comitium, makes no mention of any arch; and the silence of so correct and minute a writer is, I think, a decisive proof that none was ever built.

Two inscriptions belonging to a Triumphal Arch of Germanicus, it seems, were found near here, from whence Venuti sagely conjectures this to be that Triumphal Arch. It is most strange that any person in his right senses could look at this vile erection, and mistake it for a Triumphal Arch at all; much less that the extravagant imagination could ever have occurred to him, that this little paltry brick structure was erected in that age of taste and magnificence, to a conqueror of imperial blood—to a hero who had refused the empire—to a prince idolized by the people; whose triumphant return was hailed with wild rejoicings that made the dark soul of Tiberius tremble on his throne—whose supposed recovery from his last sickness caused

the gates of the temples to be broken open at midnight, to offer up thanks to the gods*—and whose death filled Italy with one loud and deep voice of lamentation!

The Arch of Germanicus it cannot be, and what it was, is alike unascertainable and uninteresting; for, except that it is ancient, it is really much such an arch as would be thrown over a village brook.

These are all the ancient arches that now remain. Several have been demolished even in modern times. The most beautiful was knocked down by Alexander VI. who is called, by the good Catholics themselves, the Devil of a Pope; and we heretics, therefore, may be pardoned for wishing him at the devil before he had done the deed. The people of Rome, to this day, are persuaded he was little better than Lucifer, if not that arch fiend himself. It was to improve the city that this worthy person signalised his taste and judgment by pulling down the Triumphal Arch of Marcus Aurelius, which, in his time, adorned the Corso, in order that the direct line of the street might no longer be interrupted. This beautiful monument of antiquity stood at the Piazza di San Lorenzo, in Lucina, beside the Fiano Palace, then called di Portogallo, which gave its name also to the arch. The admirable bas reliefs which were taken from this arch at the period of its destruction, and are now preserved on the first landing of the staircase of the Picture Gallery of the Capitol, give a high idea of

* Tacitus, Ann. lib. ii.

its perfection. Two of its columns, of Verde Antico marble, are in the Corsini Palace at St John Lateran. In that part of the Corso, near the Vicolo de Macel di Corvi, in the pontificate of Pius IV. were found the overthrown and buried bassi relievi, and broken columns of a magnificent Triumphal Arch, of Grecian marble, erected in honour of the Emperor Claudius, after his triumphal return from Britain, and described by Suetonius.

Some remains of an arch dedicated to the Emperor Gordian, were found in the Corso, near the Piazza Sciarra; but, from the state of the arts at that period, its destruction can cause comparatively little regret.

LETTER XXXIV.

AQUEDUCTS.

We drove this morning to the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gierusalemme on the Esquiline Hill, and leaving the carriage, walked through an adjoining field or vineyard to see the magnificent ruins of the Claudian Aqueduct, whose lofty arches of stone stand at the walls of Rome, an everlasting monument of her power and splendour. This mighty work, which was carried through the hills, and across the vallies of Latium for a distance of fifty miles, terminated at this spot, where it is joined by the brick arches of the Aqueduct of Nero, which extended to the brink of the Cœlian Hill, where it supplied his Nymphæum, his fountains, his lakes, his baths, and all the prodigal luxuries of the gardens of his Golden House. It was not till long after the bounds of the imperial palace were circumscribed, that the aqueduct was prolonged by Septimius Severus to the Palatine Hill.

The ruined Aqueducts, which stretch over the Campagna to the south, in long and broken lines of lofty arches, are the Martian and the Claudian.

Of all the Aqueducts of Ancient Rome these alone remain, even in ruin; yet, shattered and fallen as they are, we still see their former greatness in their present decay, and vainly ask ourselves when earth will view such works again?

As if to contrast their grandeur with its own meanness, run the low arches of the wretched little Aqueduct of Sextus V. like a pigmy beside a giant. We needed not this at Rome to make us feel that we are the dwindled sons of little men.

An elaborate work was written on the Aqueducts of Ancient Rome, in the age of Trajan, by Frontinus, who was employed by Nerva to repair the Aqueducts. To say the truth, I have never read a word of it myself, but I mention it, that you may if you please. I contented myself with Nardini and other Italian authors, who no doubt borrowed their knowledge from his lucubrations, as I shall do from theirs; and who proved quite as tiresome to me, as I can possibly do to you. Since I cannot be learned, however, I will endeavour not to be long.

For nearly four centuries and a half after the building of Rome, its inhabitants had no water except what the Tiber and the natural springs supplied. At that period, the Consul, Appius Claudius Cæcus, after he had constructed the Appian Way, built the first aqueduct, which conveyed a stream of water from a distance of eleven miles on the way to Prænestе.

Thirty years afterwards, a second aqueduct was made, which brought the water of the Anio from the neighbourhood of Tivoli, and the expence of its erection was defrayed by the spoils taken from Pyrrhus.

The Martian Aqueduct, the ruins of which still remain, and form one of the few vestiges of the works of the Republic, was built by Quintus Martius Rex Censor, a hundred and twenty-five years before Christ. The Aqua Martia was always esteemed the most salubrious among the ancients, but the water no longer flows to Rome. It is lost in the Anio, now the Teverone.

Besides the Aqua Martia, the Aqua Tepula and the Aqua Julia were subsequently conveyed to Rome in different channels, but in the same aqueduct.

Close to the Porta Maggiore, we observed, in the ruined wall of the Martian Aqueduct, the three distinct channels of these three different waters. The lowest was the Aqua Marcia, the central the Aqua Tepula, and the highest the Aqua Julia, which was brought to Rome by Marcus Agrippa, who gave it that name in honour of Julius Cæsar. Agrippa also brought the Aqua Virgina to Rome for the use of his baths. This water, after being lost for a length of time, was recovered, and again brought to Rome by Nicolas V., and it still flows into the fountain of Treri.

Some remains of the Aqueduct of the Aqua Virgina were found under ground near the Church of St Ignatius.

Augustus brought a stream of water from Alzium, on the opposite side of the Tiber, for the use of the Naumachia. Some remains of it are preserved in the Aqueduct of Paul V. which brings the water over Monte Janiculum to his Fontana Paolina, but the water is different.

That noble Aqueduct of fifty miles in length, built by the Emperor Claudius, the ruined arches of which still bestride the Campagna, and terminate where we now gaze upon them, conveyed two waters to Rome,—the Aqua Claudia, which, after the Aqua Martia, was considered the best,—and a branch of the Anio, called Anio Novus, (to distinguish it from another called the Anio Vetus,) which had the highest level of any water in Rome.

The first was conveyed a distance of thirty-five, the last of sixty-two miles, as one of the inscriptions on the Porta Maggiore records.

The Claudian Aqueduct, as I have already mentioned, was prolonged from the Porta Maggiore to the brink of the Cœlian Hill by Nero, and from thence to the Palatine by Septimius Severus. That Emperor, however, is said to have built another Aqueduct, some remains of which are still to be seen near Torre de Mezza Via, half way to Albano. Caracalla carried the Aqua Algenziana,—so called from Mount Algidus, from whence it was brought,—to his baths. It flowed in the channel above the arch of Claudius Drusus, at the Porta Sebastiana. It was sometimes called Aqua Antonianæ. Trajan brought a stream of water from the other side of the Tiber, and probably made use

of Augustus's Aqueduct for its conveyance, for it is not recorded that he built any.

Alexander Severus brought a water called Alessandrina, and several other waters were brought by other Emperors.

In the time of Frontinus there were nine Aqueducts, and authors of later days magnify the number to fourteen, and even to twenty. But the latter statement, which rests on the authority of Victor alone, is supposed to be exaggerated; it is probable that he counted the different channels, or conduits of water, not the Aqueducts.

By some the ruin of the Aqueducts is ascribed to Vitigis; by some to Attila; and by others, with more appearance of reason, to Totila,—for this act of wanton destruction is sufficiently consonant with his actual demolition of one-third of the walls, and his declared resolution of razing the whole city to the ground. Perhaps all these barbarians contributed to their ruin; but be this as it may, it is certain the Aqueducts were ruined in the sixth century; yet their remains seem destined to strike future ages with wonder; and, if exempted from violence, to last as long as the world itself.

Notwithstanding their destruction, Rome is now, as anciently, the city in the world the best supplied with water. Three Popes have conducted to it three noble streams, though, why they thought it necessary to construct aqueducts, instead of employing the more humble and ordinary mode of conveyance in pipes, is more than I can imagine.

The best of these modern waters is that brought

by Sixtus V. to the Fontana di Termini; the next is the Acqua Vergine*, the only ancient water that flows to Rome, reconducted by Nicolas V. to the Fontana di Trevi; the last is that brought over Monte Janiculum by Paul V. to the Fontana Paolina, which is so unwholesome that its use is prohibited.

Upon the wide waste of the Esquiline Hill stands a brick building called the "Trophies of Marius," from two sculptured marble trophies which adorned two of its niches, and which are now in the Piazza del Campidoglio. Of these trophies, and of the discordant opinions entertained respecting them by the learned, I have already given you some account.†

With respect to the building itself, I believe there is but one opinion, viz. that it is a castle of the Julian water, which, as we have just seen, was brought by Agrippa in the Martian Aqueduct.

This castellum was one of those immense reservoirs from which the water was distributed to different parts of the city.

There are some remains of another in the vineyard in which the Temple of Minerva Medica stands, now converted into a sort of dwelling-house; and scattered vestiges of many more may still be traced.

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* So called, from its purity; or, according to some accounts, from a virgin, who first shewed the source to some thirsty Roman soldiers.

† Vide Letter Sixth.

We lingered long amidst the ruins that cover "the wide field of the Esquiline." Though yet early in February, the ground beneath our feet was thickly painted with the blue scentless violet, and our senses were regaled with the odoriferous smell of bean blossom.

The extraordinary effect of perfumes in this climate, which our countrymen are so apt to impute to the prejudice or affectation of the Romans, was here exemplified upon one of our own nation, and one of the most incredulous of them—Lady ——, who nearly fainted from the scent of the bean field, and revived as soon as she was carried out of it and placed in the open carriage, although still exposed to the beams of the sun, which I fancied had been the cause of her indisposition. Either the perfume or the heat, (which even at this early season was powerful,) proved overpowering to several others of the party; but they were so tempered by the soft Favonian breeze, that I felt only that exhilaration of spirits which the delightful sensation of returning spring, and the sight of nature rejoicing beneath its genial influence, never fail to inspire.

But my present business is not to describe the beauties of spring, nor any thing but aqueducts; and I am sure you will rejoice to hear that you have got to an end of them, and of this letter.

LETTER XXXV.

OBELISCS.

ROME alone, of all the cities of the world, boasts the Obelisks of Egypt. These sublime monuments of the grandeur of past ages, were not formed, like the works of our degenerate days, by the slow aggregation of minute parts, but hewn out of one tremendous block of everlasting granite. They were destined to perpetuate the memory of Egyptian Kings, whose very existence is now forgotten. They were brought hither to swell the triumph of Roman Emperors, whose long line they have seen pass away. They were overthrown by barbarians, whose civilized descendants now lament their fall; and they have been re-erected to the glory of Popes, with whose obscure names they are now inscribed. It is a strange, and somewhat a humiliating contrast, that it has been considered a triumph in modern art, even to raise from the ground those masses which were brought from the remote regions of Nubia, to grace the ancient capital of the world.

So arduous did this enterprize appear, and so great were the difficulties attending it, that when the elevation of the Obelisc now in the Piazza del Popolo, was determined upon, several years of preparation elapsed before it could be carried into effect. Men of science, all over Europe, were consulted upon the means of accomplishing it. Proposals from architects, engineers, and mathematicians, were sent in from all quarters; and when, after mature deliberation, the plan of Fontana was adopted, and every thing was at last in readiness for the great attempt, the day was ushered in by the celebration of high mass in St Peter's, after which, the architect and the workmen received the solemn benediction of the Pope,* who implored the blessing of Heaven to prosper their great undertaking. The engines were then set in motion, and an incredible number of labourers and horses strained every nerve to aid their effect; but it was not until after fifty-two unsuccessful efforts, that the mighty mass was raised from the earth and swung in air. Then the shouts of assembled thousands rent the air;—the cannon from the Castle San Angelo proclaimed the triumphant tidings, and the bells of all the churches rang peals of joy.

This Obelisc—the first that now strikes the eye of the stranger on his entrance into the Eternal City—was also the first that was ever seen in Rome. It was brought from Egypt by Augustus, and pla-

* Sixtus V. A. D. 1589.

ced in the Circus Maximus, where it served as the gnomon of a dial.

According to Pliny, it was the work of Senneserteus, or Semnesyrtæus, who was King of Egypt in the time of Pythagoras, and who is believed to be the same with Psammuthis, or Psammis, the son of Nechos, or Nechao,* whose tomb has recently been discovered at Thebes, by Mr Belzoni, adorned with the finest specimens of Egyptian painting which have come down to our time. The names of the father and the son are inscribed on all the middle lines of the hieroglyphics of this Obelisc.

The last Obelisc that was brought to Rome, which also stood in the Circus Maximus, was originally dedicated, in Thebes, to the Sun, by Remesses, or Ramesses, the son of Heron, (according to Hermapion,) who flourished fifteen hundred years before Christ. The name of Mesphres, (the fifth King of the eighteenth dynasty, according to Manetho,) who flourished seventeen hundred years before Christ, is inscribed in hieroglyphics on all the four sides. Thus, if the opinion of Herodotus be entitled to credit, that the Pyramid of Cheops was built only twelve generations before Cambyses, this Obelisc is of far higher antiquity; and so indeed are all the true Obeliscs of Egypt.

This great Obelisc of Remesses, the largest that

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* Vide the article Egypt, in the Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica, vol. iv. Part I.

was ever transported to Rome, was brought thither by Constans II., who erected it on the Spina of the Circus Maximus; and in modern times it was re-erected in front of the Lateran Church, by Sixtus V. As it was by far the loftiest of them all, it sustained, in its fall, the most injury; yet, after having been shattered into fragments, patched together, and elevated once more, its diminished height still reaches to upwards of a hundred feet.

The Obelisc, mentioned by Pliny, which was brought to Rome by Augustus, and erected in the Campus Martius, in order to serve as the gnomon to a dial, now stands on Monte Citorio.*

This Obelisc, is said, by Pliny, to have been the work of Sesostris; but it is attributed, by the highest authority of the present day, to Pheron, his son,† (who, according to Herodotus, erected two Obelisces,) though it bears the name of his father, as well as his own. The inscription is now believed to contain only the pompous list of the genealogy and the praises of the King, instead of those annals

* Monte Citorio is rather a rise than a hill, and is wholly unmentioned in all we hear of Ancient Rome. Its name, however, is deduced from antiquity. Nardini, lib. vi. 3, supposes it to be corrupted from Citarorio, or the place where the Centurions were cited one by one. The vulgar believe that this mount was raised by the earth, with which they suppose the Pantheon to have been filled, in order to build the dome upon it! We can scarcely imagine that the great architects of antiquity would be obliged to have recourse to such a clumsy contrivance.

† Vide Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica, p. 25.

of ancient Egyptian learning and science which, in the time of Pliny, it was supposed to record.

The two Obelisks that stood at the entrance of the Mausoleum of Augustus, are believed to have been brought to Rome by Claudius. One of them now stands in front of Santa Maria Maggiore, and the other, which is without hieroglyphics, on Monte Cavallo, between the Equestrian Statues of Castor and Pollux.

The Obelisc found in the Circus of Caracalla, now stands on the Fountain of the Piazza Navona.

Two little Obelisks, which are believed to have stood of old before the Temples of Isis and Serapis, were found in the gardens of the Dominican Convent, behind the Church of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva. One of them, sadly reduced from its ancient altitude, is now elevated on the back of a marble elephant in front of that church; the other adorns the Fountain in the Piazza della Rotonda.

I cannot admire the taste of elevating Obelisks on the backs of animals, or sticking them upon the top of a little perpendicular pedestal; in one of which situations they are invariably placed at Rome. They ought to stand, as in Ancient Egypt, on a platform of stone, raised only two or three steps from the ground.

An Obelisc, the history of which seems very obscure, stands in the grounds of the Villa Mattei, on the Cœlian Hill; and another, which was found in the Circus of Heliogabalus, near the Porta Maggiore, now lies broken on the ground in a back Court of the Vatican Palace.

The Obelisc which now stands in the Grand Piazza of St Peter's, has no hieroglyphics upon it. It is said to have been made in Heliopolis, by Nuncoreus, who, according to Diodorus, was a son of Sesostris; and it was brought from Egypt by Caligula, who erected it in the Circus of Nero, where it remained, exactly on the spot now occupied by the Sacristy of St Peter's, till it was removed to its present situation in the centre of the Piazza, by Sixtus V. It is the only Obelisc at Rome that has not been broken and overthrown; and, from its state of perfect preservation, its purity of colour, and freshness of finish, it is perhaps the most beautiful of them all.

The ancient history of the Obelisc which stood in the Circus of Sallust, is a little obscure; but its authenticity is indisputable. It is not known by what Egyptian King it was made, nor by what Roman Emperor it was transported to Rome. The hieroglyphics are, in part, duplicates of those on the Obelisc in the Piazza del Popolo. Some of those on the shattered parts are spurious, being modern restorations.

This Obelisc now crowns the lofty summit of the Pincian Hill, in front of the Church of the Trinità de' Monti, towering far above the domes, the towers, and the palaces of modern Rome, and enjoys by far the most beautiful situation of all the Obelisces of Rome. But no cold description can convey to you, at a distance, the feelings with which such monuments as these are viewed here. How often, when the calm moonbeams have shone

on the beautiful solitude of the Trinità de' Monti, and involuntarily awakened feelings too deep for expression, have I gazed in the silence of the night on the tall summit of that stupendous Obelisc pointing to the skies, and thought that, among the works of men, there are none more sublime than these! Their formation is lost in the earliness of time, and they will probably last till time be no more; till the earth, and "all that it inherits," have passed away. In them, art seems for once to have vied in durability with the works of nature. Formed of the most imperishable of materials, they are fashioned by the being of a day, but they have remained, while countless generations have gone down to the dust. They have survived all that mankind deem most stable—laws, languages, institutions, nations, dynasties, governments, and gods. They are the work of a people now no more—the monuments of a religion passed away, and covered with the characters of a language that is forgotten. The unknown antiquity, and the mysterious obscurity that involve their origin—the long flight of ages past, and the dark and distant futurity to come, that open on our mind while we contemplate them, make us sensible of our own littleness—make us remember, that, in the passage of a moment, we who now feel, think, admire, and meditate, shall be no more; while they will still stand the wonder and admiration of the world.

LETTER XXXVI.

TOMBS.—THE SEPULCHRE OF PUBLICOLA, OF FABRICIUS, OF THE VESTAL VIRGINS, OF BIBULUS, OF THE CLAUDIAN FAMILY, OF TRAJAN, OF THE SCIPIOS, OF THE MANIGLIA FAMILY.—THE COLUMBARIUM, OF THE FREEDMEN OF AUGUSTUS —TOWER OF CECILIA METELLA—FRAGMENTS OF THE SEPULCHRE OF THE SERVILIAN FAMILY.

Tombs formed a far more prominent feature in ancient communities than in ours. They were not crowded into obscure church-yards, or hidden in invisible vaults, but were sedulously spread abroad in the most conspicuous places, and by the sides of the public ways. It would seem as if these mementos of mortality were not so painful or so saddening to Pagans as to Christians; and that death, when believed to be final dissolution, was not so awful and revolting as when known to be the passage to immortality. Is it that, in the secret heart of man, the small still voice of conscience bids him to tremble, rather than rejoice in a judgment to come, so distinctly announced—a state of future existence so dimly unveiled? Fear is a more power-

ful passion of the mind than hope, and therefore the threatened terrors of futurity may often be predominant over its promised joys—therefore revelation may have thrown over the valley of the shadow of death, a deeper gloom, rather than a brighter radiance. But I pretend not to explain the paradox, I only state it; and, certain it is, that every image connected with human dissolution, seems now more fearful to the imagination, and is far more sedulously shunned, than it ever was in times when the light of Christianity had not dawned upon the world.

The tombs of the Romans were characterized by their impressive grandeur. Those who have traced the long line of the Appian Way, between its ruined and blackening sepulchres, or stood in the Street of Tombs that leads to the Gate of Pompeii, and gazed on the sculptured magnificence of these marble dwellings of the dead, must have felt their solemnity, and admired their splendour.

The ancient Romans never permitted the dead to be buried within the city,* a practice well worthy the imitation of its modern inhabitants. But this law must be understood with this limitation, that the Senate occasionally granted exemption from it, to distinguished individuals, though so rarely, that a tomb within the walls of Rome seems to have been considered a reward of the most pre-eminent virtue.

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* Hominem mortuum in urbe ne sepelito, neve urito; one of the laws of the Twelve Tables.

Publicola was buried near the Velia, on the Palatine Hill,* and his descendants possessed, though they did not exercise, the right of interment there. Fabricius,† too, was buried within the city; and it would appear that the Vestal Virgins who died spotless received the same honourable tomb.‡

Trajan was the first Emperor, but not, as the antiquaries pretend, the first man, who received the honour of sepulture in Rome. Indeed, the vestiges of two tombs, of far more ancient date, stand in the heart of the city; and though it has pleased some of the learned to assert that they were not within the walls until, (as they say,) Trajan enlarged their circle to comprehend his Forum,§ I cannot see how buildings situated on the declivity of the Capitoline (the central) Hill, could ever have been excluded from the walls that enclosed the Seven Hills of Rome.

Indeed, the inscription on one of the tombs‖

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* Plutarch's Life of Publicola. † Cic. Legg. ii. 23.

‡ Serv. in Virg. Æn. ix.

§ I believe this assertion to be entirely devoid of foundation. The inscription upon Trajan's Pillar records the cutting down of the Quirinal Hill to form a plain for his Forum, but mentions no extension of the walls, a circumstance which, if it had happened, would surely not have been left unnoticed.

‖ The inscription is as follows:—

C. PUBLICIO. L. F. BIBVLO. AED. PL. HONORIS
VIRTVTISQVE.—CAVSSA. SENATVS
CONSVLTO. POPVLIQUE. IVSSV. LOCVS.
MONVMENTO. QVO. IPSE. POSTERIQVE
FIVS.—INFERRENTVR. PVBLICE. DATVS. EST.

proves that the place of its erection was an honour accorded by the Senate and people of Rome to the merits and services of Caius Publicius Bibulus—a name which, however, makes no great figure in history; and, in fact, after the most diligent research, it has been impossible to discover who he was.

He could not have been that colleague of Cæsar whose useful properties as a cypher made the Roman wits remark, that it was not the consulship of Bibulus and Cæsar, but of Julius and Cæsar. The Bibulus of this tomb, whatever may have been his active or negative virtues, was an Ædile only, not a Consul.

Livy mentions C. Publicius Bibulus, Pro Questor, in the Consulship of Q. Fabius Flaccus, and Tribune of the people three years after, in the Consulship of Q. Fabius Maximus; but I cannot find that he was ever Ædile, much less that he either merited or received such an honour.

There was an Ædile of that name certainly, in the reign of Tiberius, whom Tacitus casually mentions, but not in a way which can lead us to infer that so rare an honour had been conferred upon him. The obsequious Senate, indeed, might never have remarked the absence of merit, if such had been the will of the tyrant, but the historian, in that case, could scarcely have omitted to record the fact.

A broken wall of Tiburtine stone, adorned with four mutilated pilasters, is all that remains of the sepulchre of this unknown Bibulus, which now

forms a part of a mean dwelling-house on the left side of a dirty narrow lane, leading from the Piazza Trajana to the Via Marforio. It is so undistinguished in its appearance, that we passed it twice without observing it, even when looking for it, having been led, by the pompous descriptions of books and antiquaries, to expect something much more important. The present "tenant of the tomb" willingly permitted us to enter; but, in truth, there was nothing to see in the inside except dirt.

Not far from hence are some obscure vestiges, said to be of the Tomb of the Claudian family, but I assure you, upon my honour, that they are by no means worth all the pains and labour, and filthy odours I went through to find them out.

The Roman satirists, Juvenal and Horace, censure the pomp and splendour of the tombs, particularly of those on the Via Appia. On that "Queen of ways," and way to the Queen of cities, were crowded the proud sepulchres of the most distinguished Romans; and their mouldering remains still attest their ancient grandeur.

Their magnitude and magnificence, indeed, sufficiently prove that, even in the dust, man is proud, but they may also teach him a lesson of humility; for, with two or three exceptions, the whole of these sepulchres, destined to perpetuate the memory of their unconscious tenants for ever, are wholly unknown. Vague conjecture has affixed to them, at random, the illustrious names of the mighty dead; but all are involved in one common

oblivion. The Tomb of the Scipios is alone distinguished among the crowd; and, in this instance, Fame has been just.

It is only thirty-seven years since this sepulchre was discovered. Because Livy and Cicero mention the Tomb of the Scipios as being without the Porta Capena, the antiquarians sagaciously concluded it must also be without its present substitute, the Porta San Sebastiano; never considering that, as the extension of the walls by Aurelian had removed that gate more than a mile beyond the situation of the ancient one, a building which was then without it, would now, most probably, be comprized within it. Having, however, fixed on one of the many old tombs beyond the modern gate for the Tomb of the Scipios, and having once called it such—the Tomb of the Scipios they resolved to maintain it to be, at all hazards; although a sepulchral inscription of one of the Scipios was discovered two hundred years ago, on the spot where their sepulchre has since been found, a number of profound antiquaries, (among whom was the celebrated Maffei,) instead of causing the place to be examined, which would have settled the matter at once—in the true Italian style, set to work and wrote a variety of long treatises, to prove that this inscription was a forgery,* because it was not written as they thought it ought to be, and it was found where they thought it ought not to be.

* Maffei. Art. Critici Lapidaria, p. 450. It was called the Barberini marble because in the Barberini Collection. The

It would seem impossible for a ray of truth to penetrate the thick mists of prejudice in which antiquarians involve themselves, or else one would imagine that the discovery of another sepulchral inscription,* to another of the Scipios, on the very same spot, about fifty years after, might have so far shaken their faith in their own conclusions, as to have induced them to have had recourse to the simple expedient of examining the ground. No! Inscriptions declaring the Scipios to be buried here, brought no conviction to antiquaries who had previously settled that they were buried elsewhere; and but for the accidental circumstance of a man digging in the vineyard to make a cellar, the Tomb of the Scipios might have remained undiscovered to this day.

On the road to the Porta San Sebastiano, a rude red-letter scrawl above the door of a vineyard, informs the passenger that this is the "Sepolcro degli Scipioni." We stopped and entered it, not without respect mingled with awe, at the reflection, that we were in the cemetery of a long line of republican patriots and heroes, whose unblemished

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inscription was as follows, in the antique Latin of that early period:—

Honc. oino. Ploirvinc. consent iout. R.
Dvonoro. optvmo. Fuise. viro
Luciom. Scipione. Filios. Barbati
Consol. Censor. Aidilis. Hic. Fvat. A.
Hei Capit. Corsica. Aleriaque. Vrbe
Dedet Tempestatebvs. aide. Merito.

* Vide Marini. Iscrizioni Albane, p. 9.

name was ever ennobled by hereditary virtues and hereditary honours. By the light of wax-tapers, we slowly advanced through the narrow winding way that leads to the interior of the vault. We bent down to read the names of the dead, but copies of the inscriptions have been substituted for the originals, which are placed in the Vatican, and every trace of the Scipios has been removed. Even their very bones have not been permitted to rest "within their marble cearments," but have been collected and carried off to gratify the puerile vanity of some Italian virtuoso.

The laurelled bust of Peperino stone found here, and which now stands on the Sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus, in the Vatican, has been supposed to be that of the poet Ennius,* the friend and companion of Scipio Africanus, whose last request on his death-bed was, that he might be buried by his side. But the tomb of the conqueror of Hannibal has not been found in the sepulchre of his ancestors; and it is somewhat more than doubtful whether his remains were ever interred here. The strange and inexplicable uncertainty which hung over the place of his death and burial, even in the time of Livy, it would be vain to seek to dispel now; since even then, it seems, "some said he

* In Cicero's time, the grave of Ennius was thought to be in the Tomb of the Scipios. "Carus fuit Africano Superiori noster Ennius. Itaque etiam in Sepulchro Scipionum putatur is esse constitutus é marmore." Cic. Or. Pro Arch. Poeta.

died at Rome, and others at Linternum, and his tomb and statue were shewn at both places.* I myself," he continues, "lately saw them at Linternum."

But the tradition that records the dignified exile of his latter years, and his dying request that his bones might lie there, "far from his ungrateful country," is given by the historian as authentic, and it is supported by so much more of consistency and evidence, that we can scarcely refuse it our belief.

To this day, the little lake at Linternum, upon whose shore he lived, retains the name of Lago di Patria, from the well-known fragment of inscription found there. It consisted only of

——ta Patria——nec——

but we are surely justified in considering it a part of that touching epitaph recorded by Livy,

Ingrata Patria nec ossa quidem mea habes.

and this circumstance alone is in itself "confirmation strong," that the remains of Scipio repose there.†

We must therefore conclude, that "the tomb and statue which, Livy says, were shewn of Scipio at Rome," were merely a cenotaph to his memory.

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* Livy, lib. xxxviii. c. 56. Dec. 4.

† Seneca somewhere mentions the interment of Scipio at Linternum, but I cannot recover the passage.

Near the Mausoleum of Hadrian stood an ancient marble pyramid of immense size, which in modern days was vulgarly called the tomb, and may have been this cenotaph, of Scipio Africanus; although that is far from probable; for marble was never, as far as we know, used for building till the Augustan age. This pyramid was removed by Pope Alexander VI. when he opened the Piazza of St Peter.

Plutarch seems to insinuate, that the days of Scipio Africanus were not only embittered by disgrace and neglect, but shortened by poison. "That he died without previous sickness, and that there appeared marks of violence on the body; that most people laid his death to the charge of Fulvius his avowed enemy, and that Caius Gracchus himself was not unsuspected."*

No memento of the Younger Scipio (Asiaticus) has been found in the tomb. Indeed, from the small number of inscriptions that have come to light, I cannot but suspect that many of them must have been destroyed, or taken away, long before its present discovery. At that time, indeed, it bore intrinsic evidence of having been used for the interment of less ancient and honourable families, to make way for whom, the ashes of the Scipios had probably been expelled. It is impossible to believe, that all the members of a long line of one of the

* Plutarch's Life of C. Gracchus. Langhorne's Translation.

most ancient and illustrious families of Rome, are comprehended in the few obituary tablets posted up in the Vatican. The inscription on the beautiful Doric tomb of Scipio Barbatus, is said to be the most ancient extant, and is much admired for its simplicity and conciseness. The Latin is of an early and unrefined age, before the language had attained perfection. The orthography is curious, and it has been observed, that the form of the letters inclines towards the Greek, a singularity I shall not attempt to preserve in my transcript.

CORNELIVS. LVCIVS. SCIPIO. BARBATVS. GNAIVOD. PATRE. PROGNATVS. FORTIS. VIR. SAPIENSQVE. QVOIVS. FORMA. VIRTVTEI. PARISVMA. FVIT. CONSOL. CENSOR. AIDILIS. QVEI. FVIT. APVD. VOS. TAVRASIA. CISAVNA. SAMNIO. CEPIT. SVBIGIT. OMNE. LOVCANA. OBSIDEQVE. ABDOVCIT.

Pliny remarks, that the Scipios had the singular custom of burying, instead of burning their dead.* The monster Sylla, who was descended from a branch of this illustrious family, was the first who departed from this rule. He commanded his body to be burnt, least it should be treated with the same indignities he had shewn towards the remains of Marius. Even his ashes do not pollute this sepulchre, for they were interred in the Campus Martius.

* Pliny, Hist. Nat. lib. vii.

An unknown bust of white marble was found here, and also a gold ring, with a Victory in intaglio on a cornelian stone, supposed to have been on the finger of one of the corpses. This precious relic was given by the late Pope Pius VI. to a Frenchman.

Exactly on the opposite side of the road to the sepulchre of the Scipios, is that of the Maniglia family, ascertained by inscriptions found within it. One of the sepulchral statues which was discovered here, (now in the Magazine of the Vatican,) represents one of the ancient heads of that illustrious house, a Roman matron of advanced years, and most extraordinary ugliness, in the attitude and unveiled figure of the Venus de Medicis. The lady cannot be less than seventy; the likeness is evidently strong, and it conveys as correct a portrait of her mind as of her face. She has perpetrated at once her deformity and her vanity.

Roman Sepulchres were either square, circular, or pyramidal buildings, without windows, and with one entrance only, which was invariably on the side farthest from the public road. They usually consisted of a vault in which the urns and sarcophagi were deposited, and a chamber (Parentalia) above, in which the statues or effigies of the dead were placed, and the libations and obsequies performed.

These sepulchres were generally places of family interment, like those of the Scipio and Maniglia; but sometimes they were solitary tombs, like those of Cecilia Metella, and Caius Cestius;—or great

Mausolea like that of Augustus, capable of containing all the various branches of a family to the latest generations: That of Hadrian, though similar in form, was intended for himself alone. The imperial descendants of his line, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius, were, however, interred in it.

From the Sepulchre of the Scipios, we pursued our way along the Via Appia, whose line is marked by unknown and ruined tombs. In gazing on them, on either side of the way, I understood the full force of the Siste Viator, the "Stop, Traveller;" so appropriate here, and so truly absurd, as applied in our little secluded village churchyards, where no traveller ever does pass.

The Tomb so long reputed, and confidently maintained to be the Tomb of the Scipios, was pointed out to us. It is exactly opposite to the little Church of Domine quo Vadis? which, according to the Priests, stands on the very spot where the apparition of our Saviour bearing the cross appeared to St Peter, on which the apostle very naturally put this question. The answer, if there was any, has not been recorded; but to remove all doubt of the fact, good Catholics tell you, that the marks of the feet of our Saviour are still to be seen on a stone at the church. It seems wonderful, that an immaterial spirit should leave a sentient impression on matter, but I was assured this made the miracle so much the greater.

At the Church of Domine quo Vadis, the road separates; the Via Ardentina turns to the right,

but we continued our way to the left, along the Via Appia, and stopped to see some sepulchral chambers at the huge red wooden gate of a vineyard, called the Vigna of Giuseppe Vaniolini. Long and loudly did our attendants knock and bawl, before either Giuseppe or any of his family condescended to answer. Through the manifold chinks of the gate, indeed, an old woman was observed from time to time to protrude her withered face and snaky locks; but it was not till after the perseverance of half an hour in this exercise, that a man surlily came forth; and after reconnoitring us through the aforesaid convenient chinks, at length undrew the bolts and admitted us. Little now is to be seen of the three sepulchral chambers. Though they were only discovered in the course of the last century, they seem to have been destroyed with considerable care and activity. They have been converted into pig-sties, broken up into charcoal holes, and finally carried off for the sake of the bricks. Vestiges of each of the three, however, remain; and some of the Columbæ, the little vases of Terra Cotta, still remain filled with the ashes of the dead. They obtained their name from their supposed resemblance to pigeon-holes, though to me they seem much more like garden-pots, and are made of much the same coarse red earthen ware. I remember seeing specimens of these columbæ, or ollæ, in the British Museum. They were only used for dependents or slaves. According to the inscriptions found here, (which are now

in the Capitol Museum,) this Columbarium contained the remains of six thousand of the freedmen of Augustus. Nearer to the Porta San Sebastiano, another Columbarium was found filled with the urns of the freedmen of Livia, but it is totally destroyed. The entrance to these sepulchral chambers was generally at the top, to which the funeral train, bearing lights, ascended by an external stair, and descended by an internal one; a mode calculated to give great effect to the procession.

The custom of carrying torches at funerals is of very remote antiquity. The Catholics derived it from the Romans, the Romans from the Greeks, and the Greeks from the Egyptians; for the burning of lights before the dead was considered by the ancients as essential to the repose or safe passage of the departing spirit, a superstition still entertained by the vulgar in our own, and perhaps in almost every other country.

From the ruins of this Columbarium, we proceeded along the Appian Way to the Tomb of Cecilia Metella, which is generally acknowledged to be the most beautiful sepulchral monument in the world. It consists of a round tower formed of immense blocks of Tiburtine stone, fixed together without cement, and adorned with a Doric marble frieze, on which are sculptured rams' heads festooned with garlands of flowers. That they are rams' heads, must be evident to any one who will take the trouble to examine them, but they are usually denominated the heads of oxen, because the

tomb itself is vulgarly called Capo di Bove. But this name is obviously derived from an ox's head, (the arms of the Gaetani family, by whom it was converted into a fortress,) which was affixed many centuries ago on the side of the tower next the Appian Way,* and still remains there; and accordingly the vulgar name is Capo di Bove, "the head of the ox," in the singular—not in the plural.

This beautiful tower rests upon a square basement, which has been despoiled of its exterior coating, by Popes and other purloiners, but the greatest part of it is buried beneath the soil. The wall of the tower itself, the interior of which is entirely built of brick, is twenty feet at least in thickness; and its solidity and circular form have resisted the assaults of barbarian violence. The sepulchral vault was below the present level of the earth, and it was not till the time of Paul III. that it was opened, when the beautiful marble sarcophagus of Cecilia Metella, now in the Palazzo Farnese, was found in it. A golden urn, containing the ashes, is said to have been discovered at the same time; but if so, it has long since disappeared. That Cecilia Metella, for whose dust this magnificent monument was raised, was the daughter of Metellus, and the wife of Crassus, is all we know. All that the devouring tomb has not swallowed up, is an empty name,—the mockery of immortality on earth. It gives the shadow, but withholds the substance.

* Nardini, lib. iii. cap. 3.

Her husband, who was the richest, and the meanest of the Romans, had himself no grave. He perished miserably with a Roman army in the deserts of the East, in that unsuccessful expedition against the Parthians, which has stamped his memory with incapacity and shame.

The rude battlements on the top of the tower, and all the old walls and fortifications which surround it, are the work of the Gætani family, who long maintained their feudal warfare here. Their ruined church is exactly similar to the country churches of England at this day, and very unlike any that are to be seen in Italy. The remains of their castle will not stand a comparison with those of our feudal barons.

We pursued our way along the deserted and grass-grown line of the Appian Way, to the spot where Canova has recently re-erected the broken fragments of the marble tomb of the Servilian family. Amongst the immense number of mouldering sepulchres which arrested our gaze as we passed along, all excepting the few whose names I have now noticed, are unknown.

At some little distance to the westward, on the waste of the Campagna, are some scattered ruins and walls of a singular construction, which are said to enclose the Campus Ustrinus, the place where the bodies of the Plebeian dead were burned. Those of the Patrician order were burned in the Campus Martius.

We were obliged, by an engagement, to return

to Rome as fast as possible, without being able to visit the Catacombs, so that I must defer giving you an account of them to a future day, a misfortune I conceive you will endure with laudable patience. Adieu.

LETTER XXXVII.

TOMBS.—PYRAMID OF CAIUS CESTIUS.—PROTESTANT BURYING GROUND.—MAUSOLEUM OF AUGUSTUS.—NERO'S GRAVE.—TORRE DI QUINTO.—SIEGE AND SITUATION OF VEII.—TOMB OF OVID.

NEAR the Porta San Paola stands the grey pyramid of Caius Cestius. Who or what he was is unknown. The monument that commemorates his death, alone tells us that he lived. From it we learn, that he was the contemporary of Cæsar and Augustus, but his name does not appear in the annals or the literature of that eventful and enlightened period. The last struggles of expiring freedom do not seem to have roused him to take a part to save, or to destroy. Of his wealth, and of his pride, this magnificent tomb is a sufficient record; but of his merits, or his virtues, no trace remains. The inscription only tells us he was one of the seven Epulones, whose office was, to furnish, and to

eat the sacred banquets offered to Jupiter and the gods.*

This pyramid, of more than a hundred feet in height, is entirely built of marble, but time has changed its colour, and defaced its polish. The grey lichen has crept over it, and wild evergreens hang from its crevices. But what it has lost in splendour it has gained in picturesque beauty, and there are few remains of antiquity within the bounds of the Eternal City, that the eye rests upon with such unwearying admiration, as this grey pyramid.

It stands in the "Prati del Populo Romano," and though no longer devoted to the enjoyment of the living, but to the repose of the dead; bright and beautiful in the first days of the year was the verdure that covered "the meadows of the Roman people."

They are now the burial-place of Protestants, and consequently of foreigners only; for all Italians must be Catholics. By far the greater part of the strangers interred here are English. Their marble tombstones were scattered over the green turf, and the words of my native tongue engraven on these mute memorials, which recorded that youth, beauty, rank, and talents, had here met a premature grave, spoke powerfully home to the heart in this

* The feasts set before the statues of the gods at the solemn Lectisternium, (for some account of which, see Letter xxvi.) were eaten by the Epulones alone; but those annually served up to them in the Capitol, were publicly eaten by all the Senators.

foreign land. Those who now lay unconscious here, had perhaps, like me, visited this spot in the fulness of youth and hope, as little thinking that their grave should be added to those they sorrowed over.

In one place the earth was newly turned up. It was the grave of one, who, in the flower of youth, and the pride of fortune, had fallen a victim to disease, in the very scene whither pleasure had led him; and the new-laid stone, which recorded his early virtues, spoke the grief of the friends and companions who had raised this mournful tribute to his memory.

The stillness and seclusion of the spot, the soft verdure of the earth, the ethereal brightness of the heavens, the graves of yesterday at our feet, and the proud tomb of the Roman that died eighteen centuries ago, backed by the dark battlements of the old walls of the city,—all were in harmony with the deep repose of the scene, and the heart felt its melancholy beauty.

We entered the sepulchre of Caius Cestius, and dimly saw, by the light of torches, some faded specimens of ancient painting which had once been beautiful, and we could still trace the perfection of their design, in all its Grecian taste and correctness.

At the base of the pyramid stand two marble columns, which were found beneath the ground, and re-erected by some of the Popes. One foot, which is all that remains of the colossal statue in

bronze of Caius Cestius, that formerly stood before his tomb, is now in the Museum of the Capitol.

The Mausolcum of Augustus was erected on the banks of the Tiber in the Campus Martius, shaded with a grove of poplars, and adorned with two Egyptian Obeliscs. Until the extension of the walls by the Emperor Aurelian, it was without the gate of the city. So great was the solidity of this mighty fabric, that it has been triumphant over the attacks of Time, Goths, and Popes; and its vast circumference is still entire, though the upper part is a restoration of modern days. The ancient reticulated walls, in union with these clumsy new ones, may be seen in the court of the Palazzo Valdombrini, in the Ripetta;* but so closely is it hemmed in with mean modern buildings, that this small segment of their immense circle is almost the only view that is now to be obtained of the exterior.

The interior was for a long time a garden, but late *improvements* have converted it into an arena for bull-baiting; and the rows of seats raised round it, something in the style of an ancient amphitheatre, are crowded in the evenings of summer with the modern Romans, who, in their taste for blood at least, seem to resemble their ancient predecessors.

It is certainly better to sacrifice bulls than men to the ferocious passions of the multitude, but I

* The common pavement of the gateway here, and in many parts of Rome, is of broken pieces of serpentine and ancient marble; but, till the dirt is washed off, no eye can discover it.

fear human nature is much the same now as in former ages, and that those who to-day flock to feast their eyes with the dying agonies of a noble quadruped, would have seen, with the same savage exultation, men tear each other to pieces, or fall in combats with wild beasts.

That delight so general among mankind in war and battles, with all their sanguinary horrors, may, I fear, be referred to much the same feelings; yet, bad and bloody as we still are, we cannot think without horror, that those Romans, whose very name we still venerate, instituted schools and colleges to train men to murder each other, and to die themselves for the diversion of their fellow-creatures.*

But, in the vices of these proud Masters of the World, I am forgetting their tombs.

Three ranges of vaults anciently ran round the walls of the capacious Mausoleum of Augustus, which was destined for his whole race, and that of his kinsmen and descendants to the remotest degree; in short, as we should say in Scotland, for his whole clan.

We entered all that now remain of these imperial chambers of the dead. They are subdivided into

* There was a College of Gladiators on the Cœlian Hill, another on the Esquiline, another at the little town four miles from Rome, on the Via Labicana, (the ruins of which are now called the Cento Celle,) as appears from two inscriptions of the time of Commodus found there, and preserved in the Villa Albani.

small sepulchral cells communicating with each other. In one, said to have contained the ashes of Augustus, was a heap of charcoal. It was dust, equally worthy dust with that of the cold calculating selfish tyrant, whose whole life was one continued masquerade of virtue. In another division, where we were told the remains of the virtuous Agrippina had reposed, we found a cart. Her husband Germanicus, Octavia, Marcellus, Drusus, Agrippa, Caius and Lucius, Livia, Tiberius, and Caligula, are said to have been buried here,—the best and greatest, the vilest and most infamous, the murderers and the murdered, confounded in one common grave.

What became of the Sarcophagus of Augustus, and of all those which filled this imperial Mausoleum, is unknown.

We left the still more magnificent Mausoleum of Hadrian,—its sepulchral character having completely merged in that of the Castle St Angelo,—for a future visit.

Pursuing our tour of the Tombs, we left Rome by the Porta del Popolo. It was exactly at this gate, on the ground now occupied by the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo, that Nero is said to have been buried. A tree sprouted forth from his grave, in which divers demons, and other evil-disposed spirits, were known to reside, and used to sally forth at nights, working mischief.

But Pope Paschal II. routed this convocation, for he cut down the tree, and built up the church, and had Nero's ashes, together with all the hob-

goblins, thrown into the Tiber, where they still lie. The fact, I am credibly informed, is recorded in an inscription on the pavement of the church, but I neglected to examine this edifying document.

The antiquaries of our days always insist upon knowing every thing ancient better than the ancients themselves; yet, it seems strange that they should persist in placing Nero's tomb at the bottom of the Pincian Hill, when his own biographer asserts it was at the top. "His ashes," says Suetonius, "were deposited in the monument of the Domitian family, which stands on the top of the hill overlooking the gardens."* He adds, what seems a strange proof of tenderness of feeling towards the memory of such a monster,—"There were some who for a long time decked his tomb with spring and summer flowers."

The sepulchre vulgarly called the tomb of Nero, but really that of C. Vibius Marianus, which we saw on our way to Rome, we had by accident visited several times during our residence here, so that we did not return to it now, but left the Via Cassia, (upon which there is no other tomb worth notice,) after crossing the Ponte Molle, and took the road to the right, which is the ancient Flaminian way, and a deplorably bad one it is. However, we had the satisfaction of reflecting, as we classically jumbled along, that we were now traversing for the first time,—and, as some of us hoped, for the last,—a road made by the defeated Flami-

* Suetonius in Vita, 50.

nius during the Punic War, and by which the victorious Cæsar advanced, after crossing the Rubicon, to subjugate his country.

On the left of the road, we passed one of those old towers, so many of which are scattered over the Campagna, vestiges of the dark ages of civil warfare.

Our coachman, who is an exceedingly communicative, as well as erudite personage, informed us it was called Torre di Quinto, and that "un certo Quinto, who was un' vecchio assai renomato, lived at it in *tempi antichi*." These *tempi antichi*, being, as we well knew, very indefinite in their application, we asked how long it was since this hero flourished.

"Chi sa?" says the old man, with a true Italian shrug; "forse tre, quattro, cinque secoli passati; poco piu, poco meno, ch' importa?"*

On referring to some of our cumbrous books of antiquities, we found, to our infinite amusement, that this old Quinto, (who lived four or five hundred years ago,) was no less a person than Quintius Cincinnatus—from whom the wild imaginations of some antiquaries, it seems, have derived the name of this Gothic tower—though, according to others, it was only the fifth mile stone.†

* Who knows? It may be perhaps a matter of three or four hundred years ago; a little more or a little less. What does it signify?

† The situation of Cincinnatus's house and farm has been a fruitful subject of discussion among the antiquarians. Pliny says it was "in Agro Vaticano;" but some of these ingenious

We crossed the two little bridges, under the last of which flows the Valca—believed to be the ancient Cremera—the scene of that disastrous battle between the people of Veii and the Fabii, in which that gallant band, after having voluntarily been so long the sole and successful defenders of their country in the Veian war—betrayed, by their too-ardent valour, into the snares of the enemy—fell, to the last man, disdaining to survive their defeat. These patriotic Romans remind me, in the union of so many of the same name and family under one chief, as well as in their heroic bravery, of some of our Highland clans. I know you will be amused at my nationality, when you find that I cannot praise the Fabii without bringing in the Scotch.

Much dispute has arisen in modern times respecting the site of the ancient city of Veii—the early rival of Rome—the Latin Troy, that was taken after a ten years siege—the most important conquest of the infant republic—and which, even after its conquest, had so nearly made the Romans Veientes, and Rome cease to be.*

By the usual happy sagacity of antiquarians—

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gentlemen extend the bounds of the Vatican Ager as far as Veii. Others, who are hostile to his having lived at the above-named Gothic Tower, fix him in the fields between the Ripetta and St Peter's, of which, by the way, the above-named Palazzo Valdombrini commands an enchanting prospect.

* I need not remind the reader, that it was the influence of Camillus alone that prevented his countrymen from abandoning the ruins of Rome burnt by the Gauls, and establishing themselves at the conquered Veii, which was a larger and better built city.

who never, by any chance, stumble upon the truth —its true situation, or something very near it, which had been conjectured, was pronounced to be false, and Veii was fixed to be at Civita Castellana, about 36 miles from Rome, where modern inscriptions were set up, roundly asserting the fact. Not long after this, Veii was removed a few miles beyond Baccano and about twenty from Rome, in consequence of a learned antiquary discovering the very mine by which Camillus entered the besieged city, and the pits through which the soldiers came up into the citadel; all of which I had the edification of seeing in engravings.* There was no withstanding this discovery of a mine, made twenty-two hundred years ago, backed by a long and learned treatise; and, accordingly, Veii was unanimously settled here, when, sixteen years ago, the accidental discovery of ancient inscriptions, sculpture, and, in short, the buried ruins of Veii itself, on the desert Campagna, about three miles east of La Storta, and thirteen north-east of Rome, proved Veii to have been exactly where they had decided it was not.

We had once intended to have paid a visit to the spot, but desisted from our purpose on finding that the few excavations which the indolence of the proprietor had made, are now filled up, and the antiquities that had been found in them, conveyed to Rome.†

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* Vide Zanchi's Veio Illustrato, with plates of the Cuniculus, made by Camillus, &c.

† They may be seen in the Palazzo Giorgio, Via Babuina.

From these marbles it appears, that if Veii was destroyed, it was also rebuilt by the Romans, for it was a flourishing city in the time of Tiberius, and probably at a much later period, as a statue of that Emperor, and many inscriptions, sufficiently prove.

But all this has nothing to do with the object of our present excursion, which was not to visit the site of Veii, but "the Tomb of Ovid." We knew, indeed, that the remains of the poet were interred in no classic ground—that he died in exile, the mysterious cause of which was never explained, at Tomus,* a city of Pontus, where he was buried; and that consequently this could not have been his tomb. But there is a charm in a name even when we know it is unreal; and though fancy alone has invested this ruined sepulchre with the title of the Tomb of Ovid, we entered it with feelings of interest, unavowed perhaps even to ourselves, but which we certainly should not otherwise have experienced.

It is, however, a tomb that the poet might have chosen. It is overhung with rocks, from which ancient trees protrude their picturesque horizontal branches, and shade the entrance, while they seem to mourn over the abandoned grave. The interior is still adorned with some nearly obliterated vestiges of ancient painting. One small medallion, representing a man holding a horse, is preserved in the Casino, or gallery of the deserted Villa Al-

* Its name is now, I believe, Kioria, in Bulgaria, on the Ister.

tieri, within the walls of Rome; but I cannot learn what have become of all the other paintings which, at the time of the discovery of this sepulchre,* ornamented its walls and roofs. They were engraved by Bartoli, and explained by Bellori, but I have never been able even to procure a sight of the plates.

The Villa of Ovid must have been near this spot, for it was between the Claudian and Flaminian Ways.† The Villa and Gardens of Livia, and, subsequently, of Lucius Verus, were also near here, but no remains of them are now to be seen.‡ About a mile beyond "the Tomb of Ovid," and six miles from Rome, is the Saxa Rubra, so often mentioned by Tacitus—the same where Cicero, in one of his Philippics, accuses Mark Anthony of ha-

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* It was not till long after I visited this sepulchre, that I learnt an inscription had been found here, which proves it to be the Tomb of Q. Nasonius Ambrosius, one of the Ovidian family.

† L. i. de Ponto. ep. viii. v. 44.

‡ On the site of these gardens, a great many busts of Lucius Verus, and one of his colleague, Marcus Aurelius, were found about fourteen years ago, and also a very pretty little marine Venus, which may be seen gratis, and purchased for five hundred guineas, at the studio of a sculptor, Via Della Fontanella, leading from the Corso to the Babuino. The busts of Lucius Verus are more numerous than those of any other Emperor; indeed, they bear testimony to the truth of his historical character, and inform us how well he loved to multiply his own dear image! You may read his history in his face.

ving spent a day in drunkenness at a little obscure public house. It now bears the nearly equivalent name of the Grotta Rossa; but as we understood there was nothing whatever to be seen at it, and were nearly jolted to death, we returned home.

On whichever side you leave Rome, the feeling of desertion strikes you with strange and fearful surprise. From a great metropolis—the seat of the most refined arts, you plunge at once into a desert. You know yourself to be close to a large and populous city, yet you see no houses, no people, no cultivation, no signs of life; you meet no passengers on the road, or if you catch the glimpse of a human being, he wears the garb and aspect of a savage. He is clad in shaggy sheep-skins, his legs and feet are bare, and his dark eyes glare wildly on you as he crosses the waste. The incongruity of your own figures and equipage, in a scene like this, sometimes startles you; you feel as if left alone in the world. At the Ponte Molle we saw before us the Porta del Popolo, and left the desert.

I lately learnt from Cardinal ———, that in a vineyard near this bridge, called, I think, the Vigna Pino, he had seen, many years ago, some fine specimens of ancient painting, on the walls of a subterranean sepulchral chamber. Into this vineyard, however, we never could get access; and I have not been able to ascertain whether they are still visible, or whether, as usual, they have been carried away or destroyed. Not far from the Ponte Molle is a spring of mineral water, strongly impregnated with carbonic acid gas, called Aqua Ace-

tosa, to which, in extremity of Jacobitism, our old friend, Mr ———, would needs make a pilgrimage, because he had heard it had been drank of by the Pretender.

LETTER XXXVIII.

TOMBS.—MAUSOLEUM OF SANTA CONSTANTIA, OR PRETENDED TEMPLE OF BACCHUS.—MAUSOLEUM OF SANTA HELENA, OR TORRE PIGNATARRA.—THE CATACOMBS AT THE CHURCH OF ST SEBASTIANO.—THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.

From the tombs of the Augustan age, it is a long transition to those of Constantine. From the days of the first, we pass to those of the last Emperor whose reign Rome was destined to behold; yet, of all who lived and died during that long interval, no stone now tells where the remains even of one single individual repose. The magnificent Mole of Hadrian, which might seem to form a solitary exception, retains not a trace of its original sepulchral destination. Nor is there one of the thousand mouldering tombs which are scattered over the Campagna, that can even boast a name.

About two miles from Rome, beyond the Porta Pia, on the Via Nomentana, is the Mausoleum of Santa Constantia, the daughter of Constantine the Great, which was converted into a church in honour of that saint, in early times. It is a cir-

cular building, sufficiently ugly on the outside, but the inside derives some beauty from a double range of granite columns, coupled, not in front, but in file; one close behind another. Instead of the entablature, however, small arches rest on the columns—a barbarous combination, decisive of the total decline of the art, and never seen in any building previous to the reign of Constantine. That it is the Mausoleum of his daughter, is not denied. The inscriptions and the Sarcophagus found here, the dedication of the church to her memory, and the testimony of history, prove it beyond the possibility of doubt. But it is pretended that it was previously the Temple of Bacchus, and afterwards converted into her tomb, although it is particularly recorded that Constantine built her tomb from the foundation-stone, (*primum lapidem*;*) and it is christened the Temple of Bacchus, in spite of all intrinsic and extrinsic evidence, upon the sole strength of a coarse mosaic which ornaments the roof of the interior arcade, representing little Loves dancing upon grapes, and all the process of the vintage. But precisely the same devices are sculptured in the porphyry Sarcophagus of Saint Constantia. If, therefore, the one be a proof that the building was the temple, the other must be a proof that the Sarcophagus was the Tomb of Bacchus. Some wits may choose to imagine that the reign of this favourite deity being over, he was buried with divine honours; and

* Ammian. Marcel. Hist.

really such devices would seem more appropriate for the monument of a Pagan God, than a Christian saint. They are said to allude to the vintage of heaven; and though I don't know what that means, it is certain that these, and many other Bacchanalian symbols, were common on Christian tombs at a much later period than the age of Constantine. They were found in the Catacombs, and I have seen them myself on the tomb of a Cardinal, in the Church of St Clement's, and on a Bishop's at St Lorenzo's. It is probable that they were preserved rather from habit than from reasoning. Christianity was new, and its sepulchral ornaments, as yet, uninvented; those of Paganism were familiar; they would mechanically recur to the head and hand of the sculptor, nor offend the mind that was accustomed to behold, and unused to reflect upon them. We all know how much easier it is to change great things than small—forms of government rather than modes of dress—and religions than ceremonies. Whatever was the cause, however, the miserable sculpture of the low ages, which continued to multiply the ancient classical ornaments of Pagan tombs, even in the fifth and sixth centuries, permits us not to doubt of the fact; and since the sole claim of this building to the title of Temple of Bacchus, rests upon this wretched mosaic of the vintage—since the same devices are sculptured on the indisputable Sarcophagus of St Constantia—since both works are in the miserable style of that age—since we have no reason to believe there ever was a Temple of Bacchus within many miles of

this spot—and, since this edifice has no appearance of ever having been a temple at all, I think we may safely conclude, that it had nothing to do with Bacchus, and that it is nothing more than the Mausoleum of St Constantia, which unquestionably stood here;* and whose bones, together with those of her sister Helen, and other contemporary saints, still repose beneath the high altar. The Sarcophagus is now in the Sala della Croce Greca, in the Vatican. Some old Pope had fixed upon it for his own remains, but luckily died before he had taken measures to secure it, and his successors interred him in a humbler coffin.

The neighbouring Church of Santa Agnese, the adjoining Hippodrome of Constantine, and all the other objects of curiosity here, I shall defer mentioning till a future period; at present, I must carry you from the tomb of the daughter, to that of the mother of Constantine the Great, although it is not in the least worth a visit, and is at least two miles from Rome, beyond the Porta Maggiore, on the Via Labicana, the present road to Palestrina.

In our excursion to it we overshot the mark, and came in view of some ruins, widely extended over the waste of the Campagna, at some distance from the road, on the right. They are commonly called the Cento Celle, and sometimes, like those on the Via Latina—Roma Vecchia. They are supposed to be the remains of Sub Augusta, a little

* Constantia corpus delatum ad urbem, et in sub urbano via nomentata post primum lapidem sepulchro, &c. Vide Ammian. Marcell.

Roman town, founded in the time of Constantine the Great.* They are, perhaps, more interesting in a poetic, or sentimental, than in an antiquarian light, for they consist of little more than broken walls, and unintelligible vestiges of Roman buildings; but they formed no inharmonious feature of the prospect before us, when, on descending a long hill, we unexpectedly beheld a most striking combination of ruins, standing upon the wild plain of the Campagna. An ancient tower, which had once been a place of defence and war, and now served as a sheep-fold, reared its rugged walls in the foreground. At its base, dressed in the same covering as his flock—a rough sheep-skin—a shepherd, with his dog and staff lying by his side, was dozing on the grass, his head resting on the ruins, beneath which he had sheltered himself from the bleak wind. Through a broken arch, the light shone full on the woody hills of Frascati, and the Alban Mount. Before us, the majestic ruins of an ancient Aqueduct, in some parts, two ranges of arches in height, crossed the green valley on the left of the road—a truly Roman remains of antiquity—marked not only with grandeur of effect, but grandeur of purpose, and impossible, even in ruin, to be beheld without admiration. Far above them, as if to contrast the noblest works of man with the unapproachable grandeur of those of nature, towered the long line

* From inscriptions found here, however, it is ascertained that there was a college of gladiators, called the Sylvian Aurelian Gladiators, in the time of Commodus. The ruins now remaining are, however, generally supposed to be of later date.

of the rugged Appenines, partially covered with snow, which, broken into masses, returned the rich yellow hues of the sinking sun.

Late as it was, we stopped to examine the Tor di Schiava, the remains of an ancient building, christened the Temple of Hope,* merely because there was such a temple somewhere on this road, where people sacrificed before they went to the Temple of Fortune, at Præneste, to consult the Sortes.

In returning, we found out the old wooden gate that leads to the ruined Tomb of the Empress Helena. By some antiquaries, this sepulchre of our good countrywoman† is supposed to occupy the site of the Temple of Quietes—not that they know any thing about the matter, or have any reason for the supposition; and it is rather more certain that it is now called the Torre Pignatarra, and that it has been built with a great profusion of brick, and paucity of taste. A part only of its immense ruined circle now remains, but we have little to regret in its demolition. It contains a small neglected church, and the habitation of the priest who performs the duties.

The immense magnificent porphyry Sarcophagus of the Empress, which was found here, is now placed in the Vatican, along with that of Santa Constantia, which it precisely resembles in the form and style of sculpture.

We entered the Catacombs from this church,

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* Ficoroni invented this name.

† I believe it is the venerable Bede who asserts that she was born at Winchester.

and walked through these narrow sepulchral pathways, until they were blocked up. They branch out in various directions, uncounted miles under ground, and formerly extended to those beneath the Church of S. Lorenzo, on one side of Rome, and S. Sebastiano on the other; but the communications have been stopped. At St Sebastian's alone, though a few miles only are now left open, they have been explored to the extent of above fifteen miles. Their ramifications, far and wide, may in fact be called endless; and their statement, even at the lowest computation, would seem fabulous. There can be little doubt that these bewildering subterranean labyrinths were the work of a long succession of ages, gradually formed by the excavation of puzzolana, an immense quantity of which was used and exported for sand, mortar, and other purposes, by the Romans.* It is probable, too, that they served as quarries of tufo stone.

The doctrine advanced by the priesthood, that they were made by the Christians for places of concealment unknown to the Pagans, is so monstrous, as scarcely to require refutation. Their amazing extent is, of itself, a sufficient proof of its falsehood; for, even supposing it practicable, to have carried on such immense works, and conveyed away the mountains of sand and earth excavated in secret, would not the very fear of discovery

* It is thought that the ancient Roman mortar owed its peculiar hardness to the qualities of the puzzolana, which still forms the best cement in the world.

have prevented their unnecessary extension? Was it not defeating their very end to make them on every side of Rome, and so large, that they must inevitably have been found out? But not the unremitting labours of all the Christians that ever drew breath before the time of Constantine, could have formed the almost immeasurable extent of the Catacombs. Still, though it was neither in the power or the policy of the Christians to have made such enormous works, it is highly probable, that, when made, they were used by them for places of concealment for the living, and of burial for the dead.

They were, however, likewise used for the burial of Pagans, long before there were any Christians. They are mentioned by Horace, and, I am told, by Festus and Pompeius, under the name of Puticuli, in which infants—whose bodies were never burnt,*—were interred; and also such adults of the lower orders as were too poor to afford the expences of funeral piles, and too respectable to have their remains thrown out upon the Campus Esquilinus.

We had long meditated a descent into the catacombs, and at last contrived to put it into execution.

Imagine us, then, assembled in the Church of St Sebastian's, on the point of penetrating into these long and almost interminable cemeteries, summoning up all our courage to encounter their mysterious terrors, and prepared for every possible com-

* Pliny, lib. vii. c. 54, and Juvenal, sat. xv.

bination of gloom and horror amidst the chilling damps of these ancient receptacles of the dead. We descended a dark narrow staircase, each bearing a lighted taper, and at the bottom entered upon the sepulchral labyrinth, the low and crumbling roof above our heads almost threatening to crush us, and the rock on either side filled with cavities for corpses.

The way was so narrow as only to admit a single person, so that we proceeded one after another in a long line, the echo of our footsteps sounding heavily on the ear, and the lights borne by each, the dark military cloaks in which the gentlemen had wrapped themselves, the white waving garments of the ladies, and the long sable robes of the attendant servants of the church, forming altogether such a striking procession through these subterraneous sepulchres, that I could not help observing we wanted nothing but the figure of Death at our head, to be taken for a company of ghosts.

The cavities for the dead are hollowed out horizontally in the soft puzzolana rock, three or four tiers, one above another. To my great surprise, every one of them was empty; not a bone was anywhere to be seen; they had all been carried off, we were told, as precious relics. But almost all the cavities seemed to be for children; few, certainly, were large enough to contain a man of ordinary size; so that, if really all filled with Christian martyrs, as the clergy say, they must for the most part have been babes, and a very small proportion could have arrived at years of discretion.

The extraordinary predominance of these cavities, the ordinary size of an infant's grave, is of itself a sufficient corroboration of the fact already alluded to, that the catacombs were used as places of burial for Pagan children; and if you consult a few moderate sized folios, out of the many that have been written on the catacombs, you will find, that tombs of heathens of all sizes have been taken out of them.*

But be they heathen or heretic, it makes no difference,—all go for saints that are found here, and not a bone of one of them is now to be seen through the whole extent of the catacombs. Having once been declared to be the precious relics of the martyrs, they have been collected, laid up for use, and exported all over the Christian world. A cardinal has the management of this lucrative traffic; and it is certainly a comfortable thing to know, that while the virtue of these bones fortifies the souls of the faithful abroad, the sale of them fills the pockets of the priesthood at home. There are sage people who think, that, like the widow's cruise of oil, the store will prove inexhaustible, always answering to the demand.

At the bottom of the staircase, before we reascended to upper day, we went into a square chapel hollowed out of the rock, where the early Christians, who were concealed in these labyrinths, we were told, offered up their orisons. The altar is decorated by a highly extolled bust of St Sebastian

* Roma Sacra Martinelli, &c. &c.

by Bernini, characterised, I thought, by a full share of his usual affectation, exaggeration, and absence of truth and nature. Service is still performed here once a-year for the souls of the blessed martyrs.

We met with none of the horrors which the relation of others had taught us to anticipate, nor even the cold and damp, which we had dreaded the most of all.

The catacombs of Rome are, however, far inferior in grandeur to those of Naples, whose spacious galleries and lofty halls, tier above tier, buried in the earth, and tenanted by the dead, powerfully affect the imagination.

In the hands of a poet, or a man of genius, what potent engines they might prove of horror and sublimity! What scenes of deep awakening interest, terror and pity, might be conjured up within these mysterious chambers! But our greatest living poet has been there, and Childe Harold may possibly bury himself within them, to scoff in bitterness at the frailties and sorrows of mortality, or people the unexplored labyrinths of death with these mysterious images of despair and guilt that obey the spell of his dark and powerful genius.*

The Church of S. Sebastian is one of the seven basilica of Rome that pilgrims visit to obtain "absolution and remission of their sins." But here

* Written during Lord Byron's short visit to Rome, and before the Fourth Canto of Childe Harolde was composed.

were we, a parcel of poor heretics, who had visited these holy shrines in vain,—for our sins, unabsolved, still stuck by us. Before we left the Church, one of its retainers begged of us—"For the holy souls in purgatory," upon which your friend ——— insisted upon knowing what good money could do them there. The man reluctantly replied, that the money was given to say masses for them, and that these masses shortened the period of their purgation.

"What rascals these priests must be, if they know their masses will release the poor souls that are broiling in the flames, and yet they won't say them without being paid for it! Is that what they call Christian charity, I wonder?"

The man pitching on his last word, only replied by recommencing his accustomed whine of "Carità Signorè! par le Anime Sante in Purgatorio! Carità!" &c. &c.

Mr ——— then shewing him a piastre,* asked, with great apparent seriousness and simplicity, how many souls *that* would take out of purgatory. The man, evidently half enraged, but unwilling to lose the money, declared he could not safely take upon him to say how many souls it would deliver from the flames, but he could aver that it would do much towards furthering the liberation of some of them.

Mr ——— then began to bargain with him for the number of masses that were to be said for it;

* A crown-piece.

and having cheapened them from one, which he at first proposed, to four, he gave him the piece of money for the "Anime Sante," and went away.

Such a conversation in such a place a century or two ago, I imagine, might have got our friend into a hotter situation in this world, than the "Anime Sante" occupy in the other.

LETTER XXXIX.

UNDESCRIBED REMAINS OF ANTIQUITY IN THE VICINITY OF ROME, ON THE VIA APPIA—FOUNTAIN OF THE NYMPH EGERIA—ANCIENT TEMPLE, OR CHURCH OF ST URBAN—TEMPLE OF VIRTUE AND HONOUR—TEMPLE OF REDICULUS—RUINS OF A ROMAN VILLA.

THE principal antiquities of Rome we have now described perhaps at too great length; but it is difficult to turn our eyes from the fallen relics of ages of glory, and monuments of grandeur, such as the earth can witness no more. In the wilderness that surrounds Rome, there are still some scattered remains that we must yet visit; and, amongst these, none is more interesting than the Fountain of the Nymph Egeria. It is more than a mile out of Rome, along the Via Appia, and you may easily include it in your visit to the Circus of Caracalla, and the Tomb of Cecilia Metella. A little beyond the Por-

ta San Sebastiano, you cross the Almone, (Almo,) a small stream which gushes out from the left side of the road, and is now generally known by the name of the Marrana. It is composed of the waters of the Fountain of Egeria, and also of the reputed Crabra, which is celebrated in Cicero's Letters. Its course, as Ovid remarks, is singularly short, being after a few miles lost in the Tiber.* In ancient times, the Almo was renowned for its medicinal and purifying properties. The cattle were brought to its banks to be healed of their diseases; and, apparently, its virtues applied not only to brutes, but to deities, for it was the custom for the priests of Cybele, every year, on a certain day in spring, to bring the sacred image of that goddess, which was no other than a piece of black basalt, from her temple on the Palatine, and wash it in this water; and it is a curious proof of the introduction of Pagan usages into Christianity, that, till within these few years back, an image of our Saviour was annually brought from the Church of Santa Martina, in the Forum, and washed in this stream.

The image of Cybele was the famous Simulacrum—that sacred stone which fell from heaven upon Phrygia—and was sent for in solemn deputation by the Romans during the second Punic War, when the prophecy of the Sybilline books declared, that "the foreign invaders of Italy should

* Cursus ille brevissimus Almo.

be driven out of it, if Cybele, the mother of the gods, was brought from Pessinus, in Phrygia, to Rome."* So, as Esculapius appeared in the shape of a serpent, Cybele arrived in that of a stone: A Scipio, (the cousin of Africanus,) "the most virtuous man in Rome," was chosen to receive her; and it was on this occasion that the Vestal Claudia miraculously vindicated her aspersed honour, by towing the vessel fraught with the precious burden, (immoveable to others,) by her girdle, up the Tiber, to Rome.†

A short drive, along a very narrow lane, and bad road, conducted us to a little green valley, covered with a carpet of soft turf, and shaded by a few scattered old trees. The grotto of Egeria is hollowed out in the steep side of the bank, in a long and deep recess, or gallery, with a vaulted roof, and niches at the sides for statues. At the top reclines a mutilated marble statue, not of the nymph, but of a river god, from which flows the most delicious water I ever tasted. The sides of the grotto are overhung with the beautiful Capillaire plant, that loves to grow on rocks that drink the water drop. This spot, though much more beautiful in painting than in reality, is, however, highly interesting, and it is now abandoned

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* Vide Livy, Dec. iii. l. 28. c. 46.

† An ancient bas relief in the Vatican Library, and another in the Capitol, represent this famous Pagan miracle.

to a solitude as profound as when Numa first sought its enchanted glade.

That it is really the haunt of the fabled, or mortal nymph, whom he loved to visit, and whose councils, in these secret shades, poured wisdom on his soul—who is there that would not wish to believe? But this gratification is denied us, merely, it seems, because some careless expressions in Juvenal and Ovid have induced some antiquaries to conclude, that the Fountain of Egeria must have been on the other side of the Via Appia—though I am sure no valley nor fountain can there be found, that the most antiquarian imagination can assign for the abode of the nymph. But these learned men are certainly not of the description of those that

> ——— "give to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name."

Their labour is to destroy them; and they have effectually taken from this spot every charm of remembrance, by pronouncing it to be the Nymphæum of some Roman villa. A Nymphæum was a luxury known only in such climates as these. It was a place of retirement, and coolness, and delight, in the heats of summer. It was a vaulted grotto, generally sunk in a hill-side, open only at the mouth, like a cave, and filled with fountains, and fresh flowing waters, and embellished with statues of Nymphs and Naiades. It must be owned that this answers to the description, and accords exactly,

though on a smaller scale, with the remains of the Nymphæum of Domitian, at the Lake Albano.

On the hill above is a temple, metamorphosed into a church, and dedicated to Saint Urban the Eighth. It is built of brick, with a portico of four noble Corinthian columns of white marble, more than half enveloped in the modern and ruinous wall built across the intercolumniations which form the front of the church.

From the grove which surrounds it, and from its situation above the fountain, it was once supposed to be the Temple of the Muses; but a votive altar, which was unluckily dug up in the area before the temple, with a mystic serpent twined round it, and the name of a priest of Bacchus inscribed upon it, has given rise to the belief that it was the Temple of Bacchus. Be this as it may, the shrine of the deified Pope seems as deserted now as that of the Pagan god—whoever he might be. The fane is shut up, and abandoned to ruin. A countryman opened the door for us, and we examined this said altar, which is standing in what was the ancient portico of the temple. All the learned of the party were unanimously convinced that the altar was an altar, and the temple a Temple of Bacchus. Some stupid old antiquarian once pretended this was the Temple of Virtue and Honour, which was built by Marcellus, near the ancient Porta Capena; therefore its site must be within the present extended circle of the walls, not a mile and a half beyond it.

Besides, this is a single temple—that was a double one—so contrived, that there was no way to the Temple of Honour but through that of Virtue.*

The windows of this temple are pronounced to be modern. The building is supposed, by Piranesi, to be of republican origin, but restored in the age of the Antonines. The fact is, they know nothing about it.

We vainly tried to decypher an obliterated inscription—fancied we could trace the pattern of the stucco ornaments that had once adorned the roof—made an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate to the Crypt beneath, and bought an antique marble vase for ten pence.†

We descended the hill again to the Fountain of the Nymph, and returned down a little green valley, where we stopped to examine a little brick building, gaily decorated with Corinthian pilasters, of red and yellow brick, known by the name of the Temple of the God Rediculus.

That a temple was raised to the God Rediculus, on account of that deity's merit in having procured Hannibal's retreat without besieging Rome, on the very spot where he persuaded him to turn back,‡ and that this temple was beyond the Porta Capena, two miles on the Appian Way,§ we

* Plutarch's Life of Marcellus. † Two Pauls.
‡ Festus V. Redicoli. § Pliny, lib. x. c. 43.

have high authority to prove. But, unluckily, the same authority proves that the said temple was on the right side of the road, and this little building is on the left—*ergo*, this is not the Temple of Rediculus.

If it had, it certainly would have been a poor return for so great a favour. The Romans never had a better friend than Rediculus, when he persuaded Hannibal, on account of a shower of hail,* to retreat from Rome. It is well known, however, that one circumstance, which struck the Carthaginian with despair of taking the city, was, the intelligence that an army had marched out of one gate for Spain, while he was lying before another. I rather wonder, that he, who was such an adept at stratagem himself, never suspected that this might be done purposely to deceive him, and, above all, that he swallowed so easily the story told him by a prisoner, of the ground on which he was encamped being sold on that very day in Rome, at its full value. He certainly took rather a childish and impotent method of revenge, by proclaiming in his camp an auction of the banker's shops in the Roman Forum, and then marching back into Campania, from whence, it would seem, he had come purely to do this feat.

Hannibal's encampment, as, I believe, I mentioned before, was on the Anio. The temple that

* Livy, Dec. 3. lib. xxvi. c. 10, 11.

commemorated his retreat was on the Via Appia,* a considerable distance from it. He must therefore have marched with his army there, when the storm overtook him which drove him to his entrenchments, declaring "that he was sometimes deprived of the will, and sometimes of the power to take Rome."

As for this little building, which is on the wrong side of the road, and, notwithstanding, bears the name of the Temple of Rediculus—the antiquaries will not allow it to be a Temple at all, because it had windows, and had not a portico; but they say it might have been an Edicola, because the rules with respect to building temples, did not apply to these small places of worship; and that, in short, it must have been an Edicola, because it could have been nothing else,—but what Edicola they cannot say. The windows disqualify it for a tomb, or else it would have been accounted one.

Be it what it may, it is really a curiosity of its kind. It is so tiny, so gay, so fragile-looking, and so like a toy, that we can scarcely believe that it has stood seventeen or eighteen centuries; yet the beauty of the brick-work proves its high antiquity. It can scarcely be of later date than the reigns of of the first Cæsars—certainly not than the age of the Antonines.

* Rediculi fanum extra portam Capenam fuit quia accidens ad urbem Hannibal ex eo loco redievit quibusdam perterritus visus."—Festus v. Rediculi.

Instead of returning immediately to Rome, we turned off opposite the little Church of Domine quo Vadis, and crossed the Campagna to the westward, in search of a spot where some mosaic pavements were discovered about a fortnight ago.

A shepherd accidentally paring off a turf, beheld beneath it a piece of mosaic. This gave rise to farther examination, and seven mosaic pavements were brought to light, which had lain unsuspected, within a few inches of the surface, for a long succession of ages.

What treasures may yet be buried beneath the wide unbroken turf of the Campagna, and may be destined to lie unseen for ages to come!

These rooms have evidently belonged to a Roman villa—some magnificent villa of the Interamna.* They are very small—about the size of those at Pompeii. Ulysses bound to the mast, and the Syrens, half-birds half-women, singing to allure him to their toils, are represented in one of them. Another is considerably deeper than the rest; and on the walls of the room to which it belongs, which are still standing, some female figures are painted, with the hateful names of Pasiphæ, Leucothæ, Scylla, and Canace, inscribed beneath them; but the colouring is faded, and the outline only indistinctly visible.

Broken fragments of statues and vases, ancient marbles, tubes of terra cotta, belonging to the hot

* Cic. Ora. pro T. Ann. Milo.

baths, and a thousand non-descript vestiges of a once magnificent habitation, newly dug up, were scattered about. It was strange to see these pictured mosaic pavements, framed in the green sod, and these shattered remains of beauty and luxury lying in this desolate waste.

LETTER XL.

REMAINS OF ANTIQUITY ON THE VIA LATINA—TEMPLE OF FORTUNA MULIEBRIS—RUINS OF ROMA VECCHIA.

We left Rome by the Porta San Giovanni, to visit the Temple of Fortuna Muliebris, which was erected on the Via Latina, (the modern road to Frascati,) in commemoration of the eventful day when the prayers and tears of a wife and mother averted the avowed vengeance of Coriolanus, and saved Rome. For this, the "Fortune of Woman" was ever afterwards worshipped amongst the Romans, and a medal, bearing on its reverse the Ædicola of Fortuna Muliebris, proves that it was rebuilt by Faustina the Younger, the wife of Marcus Aurelius. The present road is a little to the right of the Via Latina, the ancient line of which may be traced on the left by a row of ruined tombs, crossing the green Campagna. One of them is in high preservation, and beautifully built of deep red-coloured bricks, ornamented with brick pilasters,

and capitals supporting a rich cornice. It stands upon a basement paved with mosaic. The entrance, though fronting the present road, was behind the ancient road, which was invariably the case with sepulchres. Higher up the same hill, and nearly at the top, stands a similar edifice, built of brick, and adorned with brick pilasters, supposed to be the Ædicola of Fortuna Muliebris. It has several small windows in the upper apartment, and the entrance fronts exactly towards Rome. It has been ascertained, by measurement, to be four miles from the ancient Porta Latina, on the Cœlian Hill; and though Livy* says, that Coriolanus's camp was five miles from Rome, he probably computed it from the Milliarium Aureum, the gilt column erected by Augustus in the Forum, on which all the distances of the great roads were marked, which must be a mile from the ancient gate.†

For once, therefore, we may be permitted to indulge the hope, that we stand on the very spot where Veturia and Volumnia, at the head of the Roman matrons, implored the pity of the incensed conqueror,—where love for his family triumphed over hatred to his country, and the sacred voice of nature subdued the dictates of revenge.

This little temple is precisely of the same construction, style, and taste, even to the very colour of the bricks, as the tomb I have mentioned farther

* Livy, l. ii. c. 39, 40.

† The miles were, however, always reckoned from the gates of the city. Dio. lib. 8.

down the hill, nearer Rome, from which it differs only in having windows; and it resembles, in every respect, the little building we visited yesterday, called the Temple of Rediculus. Apparently, they are all works of the same age, which, if we allow this to be the Ædicola of Fortuna Muliebris, must be that of Marcus Aurelius, although, judging from their appearance only, I should have referred them to an earlier period of the Empire.

This little temple commands a most striking view of the broken arches of the Claudian and Marcian Aqueducts, stretching over the deserted plain.

On the right, are the ruins of Roma Vecchia, for such is the name given to the remains of a small Roman town, whose ancient name is unknown.* It is generally believed that a villa of the Emperor Gallienus stood here, and that a part at least of these ruins belonged to it.

We crossed the Frascati road, and a little rivulet which runs by the side of it, and walked about a quarter of a mile over the Campagna, to visit these vestiges of ancient habitations left in the desert. They consist of a considerable extent of ruined and roofless, but still-lofty, brick buildings, one of which has three large windows in front, and, in the inside, three niches for statues. It may have been the basilica of this little town. In another place, we observed two ranges of covered arches, supporting a vaulted and stuccoed roof, which may

* But not unconjectured. It has been called Pagus Lemonius, but we can have no certainty.

have been a Piscina, or reservoir of water. Another ruin has evidently been converted into a fortification during the times of feudal warfare; and the mean clumsy building of the low ages is erected upon the mason-work of the Roman walls. No remains of temples or theatres can be traced—nothing distinct can be seen or understood amidst these confused remains, and the mind turns away from their contemplation at last, perplexed and dissatisfied, unable to clear up the obscurity which time has thrown over them.

But though the name of this ruined Roman town, and the period of its destruction, are undetermined, one impression forces itself on the mind in surveying its remains—that its ruin has not been the result of slow decay, or gradual destruction, but sudden and total,—the work of a day of blood and violence. These walls seem to bear record of the time when a legion of remorseless barbarians filled these grass-grown streets, sacked the empty halls and silent dwellings, and put their defenceless inhabitants to the sword. This may be fancy, but in these ruined habitations, and in the mystery which involves their history and their fate, there is something which does not address itself in vain either to the heart or the imagination.

LETTER XLI.

ST JOHN LATERAN.

Deep is the fall from Imperial to Papal Rome. We descend through long ages of still increasing barbarism, till we reach the lowest abyss of degradation and misery. From the noonday of Roman glory, of arts and literature, we fall into the darkness of ignorance—the midnight of taste. From the antiquities of Roman days, we must now reluctantly turn to the vestiges of those times which have been justly and emphatically styled *the dark ages*; for the light of learning, and science, and civilization, was then totally obscured. Reason and refinement were fled—Brutal force, lawless tyranny, and slavish superstition, reigned over the world; and what memorials can ages such as these have left, that we should love to look upon?

Alike uninteresting in themselves, and in all the recollections they awaken, I am sure I shall anticipate your wishes by hastening over these monu-

ments of meanness and degradation as rapidly as possible.

"Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa."

They chiefly consist of Basilicas, but their number is appalling. The ancient churches received this name from being generally formed out of Roman Basilicæ, or Halls of Justice, and from being always built nearly on the same plan. The Tribune, at the upper part of the building,—the seat of the judge,—received the altar; and throughout Italy to this day, it retains the name and the form.

Many of the old churches of Rome are still called Basilica; but that title properly belongs to the Basilica par excellence,—the Seven Basilica,—which possess the invaluable privilege of according six thousand years indulgence to the penitent who shall visit in one day their designated shrines and altars.

These are St Peter's, St John Lateran's, Santa Maria Maggiore's, S. Paola fuore le murà, Santa Croce in Gierusalemme, S. Sebastiano, and S. Lorenzo fuore le murà.

Constantine was the grand builder of these holy erections. At the prayer of the female saints of his family, he founded Basilica upon Basilica; and, careless of the fate of the city he had resolved to desert, and the splendour of which he longed to eclipse, he permitted the pious zeal of the Christians to pull down the superb temples, and tear away the noble columns and porticos, that had sheltered the false gods of Paganism. There is not

an ancient church of the Papal city which is not adorned with the spoils of Imperial Rome.

It is now fifteen hundred years since Constantine founded the Basilica of St John Lateran, which, during many succeeding ages, maintained its rank as the mother of churches, and the head of the Christian world, until it was displaced by its ambitious rival, St Peter's.

It seems to have derived the name of Lateran from a Pagan source, even from Plautius Lateranus, the leader of the first and unsuccessful conspiracy against Nero,* whose magnificent house† was confiscated with the rest of his property. "This house," says Nardini, "Constantine gave Pope St Sylvester for his palace." That may be; but I must here observe, by the way, that it is common to call many of these worthies Popes, now they are defunct, who never were saluted with the title, or even heard of it while alive; and certainly Popes were unknown until many centuries after good St Sylvester had flourished.‡

Constantine, however, as they say, gave to him and to his successors, the Bishops of Rome, the

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* Tacitus, Ann. 15.

† Juvenal calls it "Egregias Lateranorum." Sat. 10.

‡ In the modern acceptation of the word they were unknown. The Italian name for the Pope (Papa) merely means father; and I need scarcely observe, that the title is to this day common to all the Priests of the Greek Church. In ancient times the Bishops of Rome had no distinguishing appellation, and were looked up to by the rest, not as a matter of right, but from voluntary respect.

house of the Roman Patriot for their Episcopal palace; but it does not appear, as has sometimes been asserted, that it had ever been his own residence. Marcus Aurelius, indeed, was certainly brought up in a house (the Domus Viri) near this, and he always preserved a strong affection for the home of his boyish days.

His equestrian statue in bronze, now at the Capitol, was found at this spot, and by some is supposed to have originally adorned it, though, according to others, it was only removed here in modern times by the Tribune Rienzi, at whose coronation, unfailing rivers of wine flowed from the brazen nostrils of the noble horse.

Contiguous to the Palace, Constantine built the Basilica; but all his erections have long since disappeared. It has been burnt down, and built up, and enlarged, and improved, and new-fronted, so many different ways, and at so many different times, and embellished by so many different Popes, that, take it as a whole, it is one of the largest and ugliest churches you can see any where. Its southern elevation is, however, imposing, notwithstanding its load of ornaments, and its glaring defects. As a proof of the taste which has beautified its interior, I need only mention, that Borromini, the last architect who improved it, built up the ancient columns of oriental granite that supported the great nave, in his huge white-washed buttresses. I could not but mourn, as I contemplated them, over the loss of the imprisoned granite columns within, and the waste of marble in the uncouth colossal statues

of the apostles without,—one of which, like a watchman in his box, is placed in every buttress.

The high altar carries above it a huge tower, intended, I was assured, for ornament—than which, nothing can be more frightful. In a semi-circular sort of gallery which runs behind the upper end of the church, there is, at one end, an altar decorated with four ancient columns of gilt bronze, said to be the identical columns made by Augustus from the rostra of the ships taken in the battle of Actium, and dedicated by Domitian on the Capitol. So, at least, Marliano asserts, without assigning any proof. However, the fact seems assumed by various contemporary writers, as if of acknowledged truth; and, probably, they knew them at least to have been brought from the Capitol. At all events, they are unquestionably ancient columns; and, I believe, the only ancient columns of bronze in the world. At the other extremity of this gallery, on each side of the organ, are two magnificent ancient columns of giallo antico, one of which was taken from the Arch of Constantine by Clement XII. who replaced it with one of white marble.

The Corsini chapel in this church, in the unrivalled beauty and splendour of the ancient marbles which line its walls, the columns which sustain its rich frieze of sculptured bronze, the gilding which emblazons its dome, the polished marbles of its variegated pavement, the precious stones which gem its altars, and the prodigality of magnificence that enshrines the tombs of its Popes—far surpasses all that a transalpine fancy could conceive. It is built

in the form of the Greek cross; but the eye is withdrawn from its perhaps too unobtrusive architecture, by the splendour of its decoration, which is, however, remarkably chaste.

The beautiful porphyry Sarcophagus, in one of the tombs which now contains the remains of Clement XII. is called the urn of Marcus Agrippa, because found in the portico of the Pantheon, although this very circumstance affords a strong presumption that it was not his; because, in the first place, Pagan temples were never used for places of interment; and, in the second, there can be little doubt that Agrippa was buried in the magnificent mausoleum of his father-in-law.

In *all* probability, this sarcophagus has been placed in the Pantheon in recent ages, since the establishment of Christianity; and it is unquestionably one of the many thousand unknown sarcophagi of ancient Rome.

Just as we were leaving the Church of St John Lateran, I observed some banners hanging up, something like those suspended in Westminster Abbey at the installation of the Knights of the Garter; but, on inquiry, I found these belonged to a batch of saints that the present Pope had canonized here a few years ago, all at once. Common Princes make Dukes or Lords, mere earthly nobility; but the Pope makes the nobility of heaven. Instead of Knights, he dubs a few Saints.

In the portico of this church stands a wretched statue of Constantine, found in his baths, which may be taken as a fair specimen of the art during

his reign, as we may suppose the greatest skill would be exerted on the statue of the Emperor, and it exhibits an unquestionable proof of its total degeneracy.

A still more hideous statue of Henry IV. of France, graces one of the many faces of this church, and conveys no favourable impression of the advancement of the arts at that period.

This is one of the Basilicas which has a holy door, but it has also a Pagan gate, which is a much more interesting object to the eyes of heretics. It is supposed to have formerly been the entrance to a Roman, as now to a Christian Basilica, for it was brought from the old Church of S. Adriano in the Forum, which enjoys the reputation of being the remains of the Basilica of Paulus Æmilius. There is no doubt, that the gate is ancient—and very little, that it is not of that early date. It is of bronze. The stars were stuck upon it by Alexander VII. The rest is antique. Some of its ornamental parts have been wantonly broken off since I have been at Rome.

I am credibly informed, that a little chapel, down the green avenue within the walls near this church, is built upon the very spot where St John the Evangelist was boiled in a huge cauldron of oil; a process, which, as is well known, had in his case a much more beneficial effect than when tried upon old Jason; for he (St John) lived afterwards to such an age, that it almost seemed, in good earnest, to have renewed his youth.

This church, as well as almost every other of any consideration in Rome, abounds in valuable relics. For, partly from being the scene of most of the principal martyrdoms, and partly from St Helena's pious care in forwarding ship-loads of relics from the Holy Land,—no place is so well stocked with these spiritual treasures as Rome. It sometimes happened, indeed, that all the cargoes sent by the Empress did not arrive at their just place of destination; for instance, one day, a horse employed in drawing a waggon-load of them, turned restive, and kicked so manfully, that its kicking was manifestly a miracle, and no doubt remained, that, not the horse, but the relics, chose to proceed no farther. There they were accordingly deposited, and a church was built over them, which is called St James at the Kicking of the Horses* to this day.

Notwithstanding this waggon-load which went to St James however, St John has some very rare and curious relics; and I shall particularize a few of those exhibited here on Holy Thursday. First, the heads of St Peter and St Paul, encased in silver busts, set with jewels. 2d, A lock of the Virgin Mary's hair, and a piece of her petticoat. 3d, A robe of Jesus Christ's, sprinkled with his blood. 4th, Some drops of his blood in a phial bottle. 5th, Some of the water which flowed out of the wound on his side. 6th, Some of the Sponge. 7th,

* San Giacomo Scossa Cavelli.

The Table on which our Saviour ate the last supper,—and which must, by a miracle, have held all the twelve apostles, although it seems impossible for more than two people to sit at it. 8th, A piece of the stone of the sepulchre on which the Angel sat,—and, lastly, the identical porphyry pillar on which the cock was perched when he crowed after Peter denied Christ. There are some towels, too, with which the angels wiped St Lorenzo's face when he was broiling on the gridiron.

I thought all these sufficiently marvellous; but what was my surprize to find the rods of Moses and Aaron, though, how they got here, nobody knows,—and two pieces of the wood of the real ark of the covenant!

But, by far the most valuable relic brought from Palestine by that indefatigable collector, Santa Helena,—is the Holy Staircase, the very same on which Christ descended from the judgment-seat of Pilate. It is certainly somewhat singular, that it should have escaped the total destruction of Jerusalem,—but here it is. It is likewise strange, that its merits should have been overlooked for so many centuries, during which it was permitted to rest in the obscurity of the old Lateran palace, and people walked up and down it with the most irreverent insensibility.

But when Sixtus V. rebuilt the palace, he brought its forgotten virtues to light, and raised for it an erection of its own, opposite the church, in which it is now placed; and these holy steps are now never

ascended but on the knees, and are never descended at all; four parallel staircases are provided in the same building, which are not holy, and by which the penitents descend.

"These holy steps that pious knees have worn," till they are almost worn away, have now been cased in wood; and so great is the passage upon it, that except on a grand festa,—a festone,—you cannot fail to see various sinners creeping up it on their knees, repeating on every step a Paternoster and an Ave Maria. On the Fridays during Lent crowds go up. I have myself more than once seen princes of royal blood slowly working their way up on their knees, their rosary in their hands. Indeed, it is only another modification of the game of "Patience," and serves to fill up the morning as well as playing it on the cards,—the favourite occupation of certain princes in this city.

I am told, the ascenders of this Holy Staircase gain three thousand years indulgence every time of mounting; but what temptation is that in a church where indulgences for thirty-nine thousand years may be bought on the festa of the patron saint?

At the top of the Staircase is the Sancta Sanctorum, a little dark-looking square hole, with an iron-grated window, in the centre of the house—but so holy, that no woman is ever admitted into it,—a Mahometan exclusion I could not much repine at, for really this "Holy of Holies" is a most uninviting place. It contains an altar, which, from its extreme holiness, I should suppose must be

nearly useless; for even the Pope Iflmself may not perform mass at it.

It has an altar-piece, a head of Christ, painted by the joint hand of St Luke and some Angels; and yet, people that have seen it, maintain it to be a most hideous piece of work. I can easily believe, indeed, that even their angelic touches would fail to make poor St Luke's performance decent, for his numerous works prove that he was no great hand at it. I think it was Carlo Maratti who used to lament that the Evangelist had not been a contemporary of his, that he might have given him a few lessons.

The manner in which this joint production of St Luke and the Angels arrived here, is, however, even more extraordinary than the artists by whom it was executed.

In the days of that image-destroying Emperor, Leo the Isaurian, it is related, that a worthy patriarch of the church, in order to save this Angelic—and Evangelic—painting from his clutches, threw it into the sea at Constantinople, from whence it performed the voyage to Rome by itself, and landed itself in safety at the port.

On the outside of the Sancta Sanctorum is suspended a collection of votive pictures, chiefly commemorative of the hair-breadth 'scapes from divers perils, effected by the agency of the miraculous image within. Hearts, hands, heads, legs, and arms, without number, are to be seen in almost every church, in testimony of the miraculous cures worked by the image or shrine to which they are

appended; but these are more than usually miraculous.

One picture represented a party overturned in a cart, and miraculously saved by tumbling on a dunghill,—another, a man in a pond, pulled out by a rope,—a third, a child, in danger of being bit by a great dog, saved by the interposition of a stick,—in all which cases, it was not the dunghill, the rope, or the stick, that got the merit of the deliverance, but this miraculous image made by St Luke and the Angels, which we should never have dreamt had any hand in the business.

These votive pictures reminded me of the *tabulæ votivæ** of the ancients; indeed, in what do they differ from them? Have not the Pagan superstitions planted here, retained their nature, and only changed their name?

Near this building, which contains the Santa Scala, and the Sancta Sanctorum, stands the Triclinium of St Leo III.—a pompous and absurd name, which denotes nothing more than some ugly old mosaic figures, the work of the low ages, that were taken from the dining-room of that saint in the old Lateran palace, when it was rebuilt by Sixtus V. and posted up into a great high Tribune built on purpose for them.

The Lateran Palace is now more usefully employed as an hospital, than as a third Papal residence.

* Vide Horace, Od. lib. v. 13.

The Baptistery, like all the Baptisteries of Italy, is dedicated to St John the Baptist, and has the usual quantum of altars, images, and shrines. It has served as the model of them all, for it was the most ancient. It seems to have derived its own descent from the ancient bath,* which the building strongly resembles in form; and, in fact, the font is a bath, being sufficiently ample for the complete submersion of adults.

The Baptistery is an isolated building of an octagonal form, perfectly plain on the outside. In the inside, eight noble columns of porphyry support a cornice, which does the double duty of serving for a base to eight little columns of white marble, that have the most paltry effect imaginable, stuck upon this half-completed order. Indeed, beautiful materials were never surely put together in such deplorably bad taste.†

This Baptistery was built by Constantine,—but certainly not, as is pretended, for his own baptism; for that was deferred, as we are informed by Eusebius, his biographer and panegyrist, till the very day of his death, which happened at Nicodemia. This conclusive statement completely oversets the

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* Forsyth makes this remark.

† The largest and most beautiful columns of porphyry I ever beheld, are on each side of what was the original entrance to the building, opposite to the present one. But they are so cruelly hidden, that, unless looked for, they will not even be seen, and their effect is wholly lost.

monkish legend, because there could have been no imaginable motive for the assertion of a falsehood, and because it must have been followed by instant confutation.

LETTER XLII.

CASTLE SAN ANGELO—ST PETER'S.

St Peter's is the pride of the modern Romans —or rather of the people of Rome—for Romans there are none. The ruined temples, the fallen columns, the sacred soil of the Roman Forum, the mouldering walls of the ancient capital, and the deserted expanse of the Seven Hills of Ancient Rome —on which the eye of the stranger rests with such undying interest—are to them as nothing; but St Peter's they never weary of seeing, admiring, describing, vaunting, and praising.

Feeling that we had, as yet, very imperfectly viewed a building, in all respects so important and so worthy of attention, we resolved to pay it a special visit. We crossed again the Ponte San Angelo, through a goodly company of angels, drawn up opposite to each other, exactly as if they were performing a country dance, and standing "on the light fantastic toe," in the most distorted and affected attitudes imaginable. These frightful crea-

tures are the productions of Bernini and his scholars. Another, larger, and, if possible, still more hideous—a great angel in bronze, crowns the summit of the Castle San Angelo, flapping his wings, and staring you full in the face.

On enquiring what was the reason of his occupying so extraordinary a post, we were informed, that one day, during a plague at Rome, when Gregory the Great was crossing this bridge, the Archangel Michael appeared to him on the top of the Castle, flapping his wings, just as he does now; in consequence of which, the plague immediately ceased, and the worthy pontiff set up his statue on the spot, in commemoration of the apparition, which nobody but himself had seen.

Why his holiness thought proper to make the archangel a saint, I am at a loss to conceive; it seems an honour rather derogatory to his dignity, and about as superfluous as to dub a duke or an archduke a city knight,—if I may be allowed so profane an illustration.

This sainted angel, however, partook of the accidents of mortality; for, in one of the many battles and sieges which this Castle has sustained, from the days of Justinian to those of Charles V., he was shot, and another was substituted in his place by Benedict XIV.

The Colossal Pine, or fir cone of bronze, now in the Belvedere Gardens, is thought, by some, to have occupied the position at present held by the angel on the summit of Hadrian's magnificent tomb —but it is much more probable that both the pine

and the peacock were from the Tomb of Honorius,* which was in this neighbourhood. Belisarius has been accused of hurling down the beautiful statues which are said to have adorned it, upon the heads of its Gothic assailants; but that great general well knew that this species of ammunition would be so soon exhausted, that I can scarcely conceive he ever had recourse to it.† It has stood many sieges, but can never stand any more. In modern tactics, it is a wholly untenable fortress; but to it, as to a place of security, that monster, Pope Alexander VI., made a covered way from the Vatican, by which he might escape the just fury of his subjects. In fact, it has been taken and retaken, fortified and dismantled, altered and repaired so often, that little of the original structure now remains, except the mighty circle of its walls; and thus, by dint of the erections, and destructions, of Hadrian and Belisarius, the Goths and the Popes,—and by the instrumentality of the saint angel who has christened it afresh after himself,—the Mola Hadrianæ has been transformed into that chance-medley monster, the Castle San Angelo; and so complete is the meta-

* Vide Nardini. The great poet compares a giant's head to this pine:

> "La faccia sua mi parea longa e grossa
> Come la pina di S. Pietro in Roma."

† The Barberini Faun was, I believe, the only statue found in the ditch of the Castle San Angelo, and it is in too perfect a state of preservation, to be suspected of having waged such a war.

morphose, that I do suppose, if Hadrian were to come to life again, he would have some difficulty in recognizing his own sepulchre.

This proud fabric is an instance how completely vanity defeats its own ends. It was destined by Hadrian to hold his remains for ever. Had he chosen a more humble monument, his imperial dust might probably still have remained undisturbed. As it is, his ashes are long since scattered —his very name has passed away, and the place which was destined to be sacred to the memory of the greatest of the dead, now serves for the punishment of the vilest of the living; for about four hundred wretches, sentenced to the galleys, compelled to hard labour, and chained together like dogs in couples, are shut up here.*

This profanation, I confess, moves me to little indignation. I cannot look with much veneration on the tomb of a tyrant, or respect the selfish vanity which lavished wealth, labour, and power, that might have erected institutions to bless and

* The upper part of it also serves as a state prison for criminals of rank, and those who fall under the suspicion or displeasure of the Pope; for, although the representative of St Peter can no longer hurl monarchs from their thrones at his nod, he can still shut up a refractory Conte, or Marchese, at his pleasure. A Pope, or at least an embryo Pope, once made his escape from it in a basket, and reserved his head, destined for the scaffold next day, for the future tiara; and poor Benvenuto Cellini, in trying to follow his example, very narrowly escaped breaking his neck, and did break one leg.—Vide *Memoirs of* BENVENUTO CELLINI.

benefit future generations, in forming for itself a disproportioned grave. Madame de Stael, if I recollect right, admires it excessively, and calls it "*noble inutility.*" That character, indeed, may be applied to most of Hadrian's plans, which had all *self* for their end. He did nothing for his subjects—nothing to benefit or improve mankind. He ransacked the world, and exhausted its treasures, to raise for himself, while living, a palace, and, when dead, a tomb, such as the world has seen no more. He resolved to eclipse the proud Mausoleum of Augustus—and he succeeded. But with his splendid talents, unbounded wealth, and uncontrolled power, what a benefactor he might have been to society, and to his species!

From the tombs of the Emperors, let us now turn to those of the apostles—or, in plain English, let us proceed from the Castle San Angelo to St Peter's Church, where, as our conductor to-day avowed, not only St Peter, but St Paul, was buried.

We represented to him that it was very unreasonable to lay claim to both, and that as the body of St Paul lies at his own basilica, which was built over it on purpose, it could not well be here also. The man would not give up the point; he positively maintained that the *viscere* only of St Paul were interred there, and that all the rest of his members were here, excepting his head, which is at some other church,—I forget what. So that it seems, while common mortals are content with one grave, saints have two or three.

As to the fact, St Paul's body may have been

cut into as many pieces as they pretend; for they certainly do divide deceased saints into very minute portions. You may find different bones of them in every different kingdom of the Christian world; sometimes, indeed, in multiplicity that is rather startling. I have heard of three indisputable legs of St Luke; and it has been my own fortunate lot, in the course of my travels, to meet with two heads of St John the Baptist, and with more thumbs of his namesake the Evangelist, than ever fell to the lot of any ordinary man; so that we must be constrained to believe that saints possess more members than sinners.

The two apostles, St Peter and St Paul, according to tradition,* fell victims to Nero's persecution of the Christians. St Peter, who was condemned to the ignominious death of the cross, was, by his own desire, crucified with his head downwards, as unworthy to share the same fate as his Master.

His body—according to a somewhat less credible tradition—was interred, with the remains of other martyrs, in a grotto or cave, now the Tomb, or Confession of St Peter, over which the church is built. But this grotto must have been made in the Circus of Nero, which indisputably occupied this very site! Amongst a thousand other proofs which

* I do not mean to imply any doubt of the fact, which is in every respect highly probable, but merely to state, that it does not rest upon historical evidence, which records the cruel persecution, but is silent as to the names of the Christian martyrs.

might be brought of the fact, I shall only mention the conclusive one, that the Obelisc which stood in the centre of that Circus, was still standing, close to St Peter's Church, on the spot where the Sacristy is now built, until the time of Sixtus V., when it was removed to its present position.

It is therefore undeniable, that since the Obelisc which was in the centre of the Circus was close to the walls of the church, the pretended grotto, or tomb, which is in the centre of the church, must have been within the bounds of the Circus.

We must, therefore, believe, that Nero permitted the corpse of the poor Judean fisherman, who had just suffered, by his command, the ignominious death of a malefactor, to be interred in his own Circus, the darling scene of his pleasures; at once polluting a spot sacred to the gods, and to the games celebrated in their honour, with the forbidden rites of burial, and outraging the religion and the ordinances of his country; or, if we refuse to admit this, it is certain that neither the body of St Peter, nor any other body in that day, could have been interred here.* Even if, by any stretch of

* St Peter's Tomb staggers even old Nardini, who was by no means the most incredulous of men. "If," says he, "the bodies of St Peter and the martyrs were really buried where St Peter's Church now stands, it seems strange that the Circus (of Nero,) should have remained here also. Perhaps Nero, inhuman as he was, in the slaughter of the Christians, was pious enough to destroy his Circus to give them a place of burial. Yet this Circus was still standing in the time of Pliny;

fancy, we could persuade ourselves that the Circus was so impossibly small that this grotto, or tomb, was beyond it, we know that it was surrounded by the Gardens of Nero, and are we, therefore, to suppose that he erected the tomb of the Christian martyrs in his own pleasure grounds?

But a bull from a Pope settles all these difficulties, which are so perplexing to the unassisted mind, and saves all the useless trouble of reasoning; and his infallibility having issued his edict to fix the tomb of St Peter here, there is no more to be said about it.

Here, therefore, a Basilica, or church, dedicated to the great apostle, was erected, originally, it is said, by Constantine. In subsequent times, it was frequently repaired—perhaps rebuilt—till Pope Nicholas V., in the middle of the fifteenth century, resolved to erect a new church, and even began a part of it, which was continued, at intervals, by a few of his successors; but it was not till the pontificate of Julius II., in 1506, that the old church

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or, perhaps, he was satisfied it should serve both ends—a circus for the Pagans, a catacomb for the Christians." I subjoin the original.

"Se il corpo di S. Pietro e de' Martiri ebberro sepolero dove ha S. Pietro la basilica, pare strano che potesse ancora esser e durare ivi il Circo. Forse Nerone, immanissimo in far strage di Cristiani uso poi pieta in distruggere il suo Circo per concedervi loro la sepoltura? Eppur quel Circo in tempo di Plinio durave in piedi. Forse si contentò che all' uno ed all altro fine servisse—cio è per Circo agli Gentili e per Catecombe à Fedeli," &c.—Vide Nardini Roma Antica.

was pulled down, and the first stone laid of the edifice which was destined to be the pride of the Christian world.

It was begun upon the plan of Bramante, a Latin cross; but the Pope and architect both died. Another Pope, (Leo X.) and other architects, succeeded, among whom was Raphael. He proposed some important improvements, but before they were put in execution, he, too, followed his predecessors to an untimely grave. The plan of Balthasar Peruzzi,—(that of a Greek cross,)—was next adopted, and abandoned. New ones followed, and shared the same fate, till at length, after endless changes of Popes, plans, and architects, the great dome, the only part of Buonarotti's noble plan that has eventually been preserved, was erected about the middle of the sixteenth century. It was one of the last labours of the life of that great man, to make, with his own hands, a model of the intended church, the leading features of which were the simple form of the Greek cross, equal in all its parts, surmounted by the lofty cupola, and faced with four corresponding fronts, which imitated the majestic portico of the Pantheon.

Had this grand design been carried into execution, St Peter's might have rivalled the proudest monuments of antiquity in taste, as much as it surpasses them in size. But it was discarded; Paul V. and Carlo Maderno laid their heads together, and substituted what we see, the Latin cross, and a front, to which I will forbear giving any name.

If I had contemned this front, even when I first

saw it, it was not possible, that, with the majestic simplicity of the Pantheon fresh in my remembrance, I could admire it now; and I gazed on the vast sweep of the noble colonnades, the beauty of the fountains, and the sublimity of the everlasting Obelisc, with feelings of mortified regret, that every thing connected with St Peter's should be so grand, except St Peter's itself. It is now, like its author man—a medley of all that is noble, with much that is base.

Paul V., in an inscription on the front, has taken to himself the whole merit of the building he had the good fortune to complete, without noticing the labours of the four-and-twenty Popes that had gone before him.* I never see it without wishing, (Heaven forgive me!) that he had not had quite so much time allowed him in this world for pulling down beautiful ruins, and building up ugly churches.

Inside, however, we found that beauty we had vainly looked for in its exterior. In every new visit, I find more to admire.

We had obtained the written permission of a Cardinal to visit the Subterranean Chapel, (once the sacred grotto,) without which, no woman is allowed to enter it, except on Whitsundays, when it is open to all the fair sex, but men are excluded. I laughed at this piece of absurdity, as I thought it, but people should not laugh at what they don't un-

* Counting from Nicholas V., who was certainly the original beginner. The popes who did not build, accumulated money for those who did, and thus all contributed to it.

derstand; and I afterwards found there were sufficient reasons for the regulation, and that—incredible as it may seem—when it had been open to both sexes indiscriminately, the sanctity of the place had not saved it from being converted into the scene of those licentious intrigues which its obscurity seemed calculated to favour.

We descended, by a double marble staircase, to the brazen doors of the Confession, or Tomb of St Peter, illuminated by more than a hundred never-dying lamps, twinkling, unnecessarily, in the eye of day; but within the sepulchre all is dark, and the tapers of our guides revealed its splendour very imperfectly to view. We entered one large, and four smaller Subterranean Chapels. Pavements of beautiful inlaid marble—curious old mosaics, of the earliest ages of Christianity—laborious gilt paintings, by Greek artists of the same era—and a profusion of other ornaments richly adorn the interior; while marble sculpture, and bronze bassi relievi, on the splendid shrine of the apostles, represent the great miracles of their lives; and their images shine on a ground of gold above the great altar which is erected over the spot of their interment.

But although it seems that St Paul, and a great many saints and martyrs were buried here, their merits are quite lost in those of St Peter, as the light of the moon and stars is extinguished in the meridian blaze of day.

This holy sepulchre is surrounded by a circular vault, which is lined with the tombs of Popes,

Saints, and Emperors, besides a long list of deposed or abdicated Princes. The last representatives of our own unfortunate Stuarts, the Emperor Otho, and a Queen of Jerusalem, are buried here; not to mention many other ill-fated members of fallen royalty,—which, indeed, it will be quite as convenient to me not to do, because I have forgotten them. The famous Countess Matilda, and Queen Christina of Sweden, have a place in the church above. Both these princesses certainly merited well of the Holy See. The Countess materially augmented the patrimony with her pious bequests, which acceptable proof of her faith was supposed to arise either from her love of religion, or of Gregory VII., a Pontiff who, while he interdicted all the clergy throughout Europe from marrying—as a sin inconsistent with the sanctity of a minister of the gospel—it was well known, revelled himself in the lawless love of that princess.

As to Queen Christina, she is, to this day, the triumph of the priesthood, not only because she renounced Lutheranism, but because, as they say, she abdicated a Protestant crown, that she might embrace the Catholic faith.

I marvel how she escaped being a saint; she was a great sinner, but that could be no sort of objection. The whispers of scandal have not yet died away respecting her fame. It is said, no exclusive partiality confined her smiles to one lover. The barbarous murder of one of these reputed favourites—the unfortunate Monaldeschi, in a sudden fit of relentless rage or jealousy, and the horrible pas-

sions that could enable her to exult in his dying cries, seem to deserve a somewhat more severe commentary than Pasquin's well-known sarcasm—that she was

Regina senza Regno,
Cristiana senzo fede,
E Donna senza Vergogna.

But I forget that I have left you standing all this time in the Tomb of St Peter and St Paul, whilst I am talking scandal about defunct Queens.

Immerging from those gloomily magnificent sepulchral regions of darkness and death, to upper day, we stopped to survey the great altar which stands above the Confession of St Peter, and beneath the dome, but it is not exactly in the centre, which rather hurts the eye. It is a pity St Peter had not been buried a little more to one side.

Above it rises the baldacchino, a gilded and brazen canopy, with four supporting twisted columns, made from the bronze, or precious Corinthian metal plundered from the Pantheon, by Urban VIII., who shewed as little taste in applying, as judgment in appropriating it.

So small does this ugly canopy look in the vast size of the church, that it is scarcely possible to believe the fact, that it is quite as high as a modern castle.*

* Its measurement is 122 feet from the pavement to the highest point of the cross.—Vide P. Bonnoni, Monaldini, Lalande, &c.

At the upper extremity of the great nave, the figures of the four doctors of the church, made of ancient bronze, and handsomely gilded, support the famous chair of St Peter; which venerable relic is also so well encased in the same precious material, that it is difficult to see any part of the old worm-eaten wood of which it is composed. This apostolic seat was unhappily broken, an accident typical, surely, of the fall of those whom it is metaphorically said to support—metaphorically,—for it is held up at such a height by the brawny arms of its supporters, that a Pope must really be a mountebank, which one of our Scotch farmer's wives once called him, and have served a successful apprenticeship to the science of vaulting and tumbling, before he could seat himself in it. From the gigantic size of these four doctors, we must allow them the praise of being strong pillars of the church.

On the left of them is the Tomb of Paul III., erroneously reputed to be the work of Michael Angelo, although executed from his designs by Giacomo Della Porta, and certainly a close imitation of his manner. Two Virtues, in female form, recline upon it. The figure of a young woman, which, from her exceeding beauty, was clothed in a drapery of bronze, by order of one of the Popes; and of an old one, whose exceeding ugliness renders her personal attractions far from dangerous, certainly bear no very obvious similitude to the Justice and Prudence which they are said to be intended to personify.

Opposite, is the Tomb of Urban VIII., by Bernini, which we shall leave his admirers to contemplate, and turn to that of Clement XIII., the work of Canova—the only monument in the church, in my humble opinion, worth attention. We look at it with redoubled interest, from the knowledge that every part of it was done by his own hand; for, until it was completed, this accomplished man had not the means to employ assistants, and was compelled to undergo the whole of the mechanical drudgery himself. The Lions I can never sufficiently admire; they are faultless, matchless, living lions—(especially the half-slumbering one,)—far surpassing all that the Ancients have left, or the Moderns achieved, in this branch of art.

The kneeling figure of the Pope, at the top, is perhaps as good as a Pope ever was, or ever can be; for their cumbrous robes, tonsure, or tiara, are so ill adapted to sculpture, that I almost doubt whether Phidias himself could have made a fine papal statue. The figure of Religion, which stands by the side of the tomb, holding her ponderous cross, —her gloomy brows encircled with a range of spikes, called a glory—is much admired, but I confess it disappointed me. Her figure is so huge and heavy, that it seems as if she must stand there for ever, for to move must prove impossible. Her air is cold, severe, and repulsive. It speaks no affliction for the dead, over whose remains she should seem to mourn; far less do joyful hope, triumphant faith, or sublime expectation, illuminate her

stern and inexpressive countenance. I must say, I never saw a more unprepossessing lady; she certainly resembles nothing earthly, and still less any thing heavenly.

The Genius reclining at the foot of the tomb, who extinguishes the torch of life, is far more beautiful; yet is there not something of attitude and affectation, far removed from the divine simplicity of nature? And is the anatomy not defective? In a celestial being, the articulations, bones, muscles, &c. certainly should not be pronounced, or represented, with anatomical precision—still, there must be nothing foreign, or contrary to nature; and, without possessing a particle of anatomical knowledge, there is something in the general appearance and effect of the human form, whether in painting or sculpture, that makes us feel at once it is true or false to nature. But the statues of Religion, and of the Genius, on this tomb, are usually enthusiastically praised; and I criticise with diffidence the works of the reviver of ancient taste, the greatest sculptor of modern times, and one of the most amiable and enlightened men that the world ever produced.

This monument, however, even if the faults I have presumed to find have any foundation, is almost the only specimen of fine sculpture in St Peter's. The gigantic figures of saints and apostles which adorn its aisles may be good in the general effect, but are bad in detail, and will not bear examination. Indeed, colossal statues are rarely the best. Artists, in all ages, seem more frequently to have attained excellence by diminishing, than en-

larging the human form. By the former, they often produce grace and beauty; by the latter, they seldom obtain sublimity. But, after all, I believe, the standard of nature will generally be found to be that of beauty and of taste.

The only work of Michael Angelo's that adorns St Peter's, is in the first chapel on the right of the door as you enter. It is "La Pietà," or, the Virgin with the dead Christ in her arms. It is said to be the earliest, as that at the Cathedral of Florence is the latest production of the great sculptor; but, like every other I have yet seen, it by no means equals the too highly wrought expectations I had formed of his works.

We delivered ourselves up into the hands of a regular exhibitor of St Peter's, to be carried all over its wonders and curiosities, and I cannot accuse him of neglecting his duty. Not a single altar, picture, statue, saint, shrine, or chapel, through the whole of this immense church, did he spare us, —but I will have that mercy upon you I did not meet from him,—for I was so thoroughly wearied with the actual investigation, that I am well aware the description must be wholly insupportable. Every altar is adorned with a mosaic, copied so correctly from the finest historical painting, that the unpractised eye cannot at first believe that it is not the work of the pencil.

It was an art well known to the ancients, and never lost even during the darkest ages. Many beautiful specimens of the perfection to which the Romans carried it still adorn Italy.

The labour and expence of each of these mosaics

are almost incredible, but, when finished, they are indestructible,—at least by Time,—as the perfect preservation of the ancient mosaics which have been buried under ground for ages, sufficiently proves. Thus, in all human probability, by means of this wonderful art, the finest productions of genius will go down in no faint copy of their perfection, to the latest generations.

It is wonderful to see Raphael's Transfiguration, Domenichino's Communion of St Jerome, Guido's Archangel Michael, and all the master-pieces of painting, copied with such wonderful fidelity, in glass or stone, and by mere mechanic hands.

The finest mosaic in St Peter's, (and, consequently, in the world,) is generally, and I think justly, said to be Guercino's famous Martyrdom of Santa Petronilla; though why called a martyrdom I cannot imagine, since it only represents below, the lifeless body of the Saint raised from the grave at the request of her mourning lover, and found to be miraculously preserved in all the charms of youth and beauty,—and above, the Redeemer bending from heaven to receive her spirit.

There is an old frightful fresco painting of the Virgin, in the chapel of the Madonna, about half way up the church on the right, (which was saved out of the old Church of St Peter's before it was pulled down,) whose merits deserve particular notice.

It is a miraculous image which still works most notable miracles, and is a great favourite with the present Pope, who never enters the church with-

out going to pray to it; nor have I ever yet been at St Peter's, without seeing a crowd of kneeling suppliants adoring it from afar, in silence and humiliation. One young, stout, simple-looking countryman, was on his knees before it to-day when we entered, and we left him in the very same place and posture three hours after, when we quitted it.

The grand object of adoration is, however, St Peter himself. It is pretended, without a shadow of proof, that he is no other than old Jupiter Capitolinus melted down; but he was undoubtedly and confessedly an ancient bronze statue,—either a god or a consul,—and here he sits in state, with the modern additions of a glory on his head, and a couple of keys in his hand, holding out his toe to be kissed by the pious multitude who continually crowd around it for that purpose.

Long since would that toe have been kissed away, had it not been guarded by a sort of brass slipper; for no good Christian, from the Pope to the beggar, ever enters the church without fervently pressing his lips to it, and then applying his forehead and chin to its consecrated tip.

If this really be old Jupiter, how he must secretly exult at his own cunning, by which, in merely assuming another name and form—a stratagem, we know, of old he delighted in—he has still contrived to retain the adoration, and continue the tutelar God of the Romans!

If I were to name a point from which the Church is seen to the best advantage, it should be nearly from this very statue of St Peter.

The magnificent arches and crossing aisles, fall into beautiful perspective,—the tombs, the statues, the altars, retiring into shadowy distance, more powerfully touch the imagination,—the lofty dome swelling into sublimity above our heads, seems to expand the very soul,—while the golden light that pours through the upper extremity of the church, where the Holy Spirit appears in a flood of glory —like the chastened splendour of the evening clouds, sheds its celestial radiance on every object.

It shone full on the beautiful columns and polished pannels of ancient marble;—Ruins of Pagan Temples, now adorning the proudest fabric of Christianity;—and the splendid canopy of bronze, the warlike spoils of the first imperial Master of the World*—now overshadowing the tomb of the humble Apostle of Peace.

We beheld the names of the Popes, inscribed on every part of this magnificent edifice, celebrating their own "magnificence" with fond longings after immortality on earth; their tombs recording their virtues, and reminding us of their short duration here, and of their awful immortality hereafter. Surely these must speak more forcibly to their hearts, and to ours, than even the herald, who, as the blazing flax vanishes away, proclaims to the Pontiff, at the moment of his greatest exaltation, "Sancte Pater! Sic transit gloria Mundi."

"So vanishes the glory and the pride, but not the

* Augustus. The bronze (taken from the Pantheon) was a part of the spoils of the battle of Actium.

sins of men," thought I, as I gazed on the great Confessional, where, on Holy Thursday, the Penitenzia Maggiore * sits, armed with the delegated powers of the Pope, to pardon crimes that no other priest can absolve. How often, through that grate, have been uttered, tales of unimagined woe and crime, foul deeds without a name, and the low and secret whispers of a murderer's guilt!

Confessionals in every living language stand in St Peter's. Spaniards, Portuguese, French, English, Germans, Hungarians, Dutch, Swedes, Greeks, and Armenians, here find a ghostly counsellor ready to hear and absolve in their native tongue.

At stated times the confessors attend in the confessionals. This morning, being Friday, they were sitting in readiness. Some of those who were unemployed, were reading. All had long wands, like fishing rods, sticking out of the box. The people passing kneel down opposite the confessor, who touches their head with his wand, which possesses the virtue of communicating spiritual benefit to their souls. The other day I was much amused to see in a church into which we entered by accident, a fat old friar sitting in his confession box, fast asleep, while a woman was pouring through the grate, into his unconscious ear, the catalogue of her sins. As the confessor and the confessant do not see each other, I should suppose this accident might

* He is always a Cardinal, and sits to receive confessions on the Thursday and Friday of Passion-week, at St Peter's and Santa Maria Maggiore alternately.

sometimes occur, especially if the confession be somewhat prolix.

For one man that I see at confession in the churches, there are at least fifty women. Whether it be that men have fewer sins, or women more penitence; or that it is more repugnant to the pride of man to avow them to man, or that women have more time to think about them, (though for that matter, as far as I see, both sexes are equally idle here,) I cannot determine. But so it is. However, the men do confess. They must. If every true-born Italian, man, woman, and child, within the Pope's dominions, does not confess and receive the communion at least once a year, before Easter, his name is posted up in the parish church; if he still refrain, he is exhorted, entreated, and otherwise tormented; and if he persist in his contumacy, he is excommunicated, which is a very good joke to us, but none at all to an Italian, since it involves the loss of civil rights, and perhaps of liberty and property. Even the Pope confesses, which I don't understand; for they say he is infallible. Then, if infallible, how can he have any failings to confess?

Mass is never performed at the Great Altar of St Peter's, unless when the Pope assists in person; an event which only happens at three or four high festivals in the year: Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, St Peter's Day, and the 18th of January, the anniversary of the completion of the church. On all other occasions, service is performed in the adjoining chapel of the choir, about as large as a moderate sized church. Here there is a fine organ, and the singing at vespers, especially on the Sun-

days during Lent and Advent, is sometimes beautiful; but there is no organ in the Great Church of St Peter's, nor is there ever any instrumental music during service, when the Pope is present.

On the pavement of the great nave of St Peter's, are marked the lengths of the principal churches in the world, from which it appears that, after St Peter's comes St Paul's at London, then Notre Dame at Paris, then the Cathedral at Milan, and lastly, Santa Sophia at Constantinople.*

St Peter's surpasses all these, and all other churches, not more in magnitude than in magnificence. Description can convey no idea to you of the prodigality, yet chaste beauty, of its rich and varied decorations. The treasures and the taste of the world seem to have been exhausted in its embellishment. I saw but one blot. The great pilasters of the principal nave are not of marble, but mere painted imitations; and this, in a country where every little common-place church has its very walls lined with marbles, excites as much astonish-

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* The following are the lengths:—

St Peter's itself, is	609	English feet	in length.
St Paul's in London,	500	ditto	ditto.
Notre Dame at Paris,	434	ditto	ditto.
The Cathedral of Milan,	330	ditto	ditto.
Santa Sophia at Constantinople,	256	ditto	ditto.

The measurement is uniformly the interior length. It is stated on the pavement, in Roman palms, which I thought would be unintelligible, and I have therefore reduced it, I believe, with tolerable correctness, into English feet.

ment as regret. This alone is mean, where all else is noble.

But however great, unusual, or amazing may be the inanimate objects which surround us, we seldom fail, in every place, to notice the human beings who may happen to be near us; and not all the magnificence, nor all the novelty of St Peter's, long prevented me from remarking the various parties that were scattered over this immense fabric.

A groupe of peasants, in grotesque and highly picturesque costumes, were flocking round the bronze statue of St Peter, to give it the pious salutation they had wandered from their distant mountain homes to bestow. Amongst them, a young mother with a baby in her arms, was compelling an unwilling and blubbering urchin, of five years old, to press his lips to the cold and uninviting toe; while the anxious maternal solicitude, painted on her brown ruddy countenance, spoke her deep sense of its importance to his eternal welfare, and her horror and affright at his ill-boding stubbornness.

Round the distant confessionals, female penitents, clothed in black, and deeply veiled, were kneeling, whispering through the grate into the ear of their ghostly father, that tale of human guilt and misery no other mortal ear might hear. Their faces were concealed, but their figure and attitude seemed to express deep humiliation, grief, and compunction. The countenances of the confessors were various. Some fat, lethargic, and indifferent—ex-

pressed, and seemed capable of expressing—nothing. Others seemed to wear the air of attention, surprise, admonition; weariness, or impatience; but in one only could I trace the tenderness of compassion, and of gentle, yet impressive, rebuke. It was an old Dominican monk, whose cowl thrown back, displayed a pallid cheek, deeply marked with the lines of piety and resignation, and in whose mild eye, shaded by a few thin gray hairs, shone the habitual kindness of Christian charity. He seemed, in the beautiful language of Scripture, "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," humble and patient, yet tolerant of human frailty, as they generally are in the highest degree, who the least need toleration from others.

In striking contrast to this venerable old monk, was a cardinal, whose robe of state was carried by his train-bearer, and whose steps were followed by an immense retinue of servants. He was going round to all the altars in succession, and kneeling before them, to offer up his pompous prayers. The servants, dressed in sumptuous liveries, were on their knees behind; but some of them, growing tired of the length of his devotions, were in this posture making grimaces at each other, and cutting jokes, *sotto voce*; and one or two of them in the rear had got up again, when the cardinal's eye glanced round, and down they plumped, more deep in apparent prayer than ever.

Near this princely priest, as near as they could get, were some wretched diseased cripples, covered with rags and filth, and crawling on their hands and knees over the marble pavement of this superb

edifice, vainly demanding charity in the most abject terms of misery and supplication. One of these unfortunate wretches, finding his petitions disregarded, at last, at a distance and in silence, began to worship the same shrine, as if to implore from heaven that mercy which man had denied. Yet, wide as was the difference between the earthly condition of that poor diseased wretch, and that proud cardinal, in the sight of the God before whom they both knelt, they were equal; their souls were of equal price; they were the equal heirs of immortality,—of eternal happiness, or eternal misery.

How different were the motives that assembled so many human beings in the same place! Some were here from curiosity, like ourselves—others from piety, like the peasants—from penitence, like the confessants—from hypocrisy, like the cardinal —from want, like the beggars—from necessity, like the servants—from duty, like the priests—or from idleness, like the numbers of vacant-looking loiterers, who were strolling about.

Some pilgrims, too, were among the supplicants of the manifold shrines, and it would be a curious task to analyse the motives that led them hither. They were chiefly young strong men, apparently from the lower classes of society, whose appearance certainly did not denote that they had suffered much from the hardships and privations of the way. Like Peter Pindar's pilgrim, they seemed to have "taken the liberty to boil their peas." At their time of life, too, the sight of new countries, and the adventures of a long journey, might be supposed to afford some matter of attraction, and the guise of

a pilgrim facilities for executing it, and a certain character and respectability, by no means inconvenient. Added to which, the secret flattery of the human heart would no doubt persuade them that they were performing a pious action, at once deserving of praise, gratifying their inclinations, and benefitting their souls.

Some of them were very fine-looking men. Their large black eyes, and expressive countenances, overshadowed by their broad brimmed hats; their oil-skin tippets, cockle shells, scrip, rosaries, and staff, had to us a novelty that was poetical as well as picturesque. Some of them had come from the mountains of Spain, and seemed resolved to lay in a stock of indulgences to serve them the rest of their lives.

"Plenary indulgence and remission of sins," are liberally offered here on very easy terms. I was at first rather startled with the prodigal manner in which that full pardon of all transgressions, which the Gospel promises only as the reward of sincere repentance and amendment, was bestowed at Rome, in consideration of repeating certain prayers before the shrine of certain saints, or paying a certain sum of money to certain priests.

I was surprised to find scarcely a church in Rome, that did not hold up at the door the tempting inscription of "Indulgenzia Plenaria." Two hundred days indulgence I thought a great reward for every kiss bestowed upon the great black cross in the Coliseum; but that is nothing to the indulgences for ten, twenty, and even thirty thousands of years, that may be bought, at no exorbitant rate, in many

of the churches;* so that it is amazing what a vast quantity of treasure may be amassed in the

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* You may buy as many masses as will free your soul from purgatory for 29,000 years, at the church of St John Lateran, on the festa of that saint; at Santa Bibiana, on All Soul's Day, for 7,000 years; at a church near the Basilica of St Paul, and at another on the Quirinal Hill, the names of both of which I have unluckily forgotten, for 10,000, and for 3,000 years, and at a very reasonable rate. But it is in vain to particularize—for the greater part of the principal churches in Rome and the neighbourhood, are spiritual shops for the sale of the same commodity.

The indulgence they hold out was, perhaps, at first confined to exemption from fasts, and other ordinances of the church, or exemption from the ecclesiastical penances imposed in atonement for sins. But they soon extended to liberation from the pains of purgatory for a stated period, so that those who, during their lives, buy or earn indulgences for 100,000 years, will have credit for it in the next world, and be released from its purifying fires so much the soone... The priests say it is the pains of purgatory only, not the pains of hell, that can be thus commuted for fines. And yet, if the pains of hell be not merited for such offences as the records of the Roman Chancery prove to be commutable for money, I know not how men could incur them. Murder, fratricide, parricide, incest, and every crime that can disgrace our nature, have here their stated price, upon the payment of which their commission is not only pardoned, but pronounced compatible with holding holy orders. In proof of this monstrous fact, I shall pollute my page with a few extracts from these foul laws, or records of licensed profligacy. For instance, "He who has been guilty of incest with his mother, sister, or other relation, either in consanguinity or affinity, is taxed at five gros." "The absolution of him who has murdered his father, mother, sister, or wife, from five to seven gros." "The *absolu-*

other world with very little industry in this, by those who are avaricious of this spiritual wealth, into which, indeed, the dross or riches of this world may be converted, with the happiest facility imaginable.

We are told, that "it is easier for a camel to enter into the eye of a needle, than a rich man into the kingdom of heaven;" but, at Rome at least, it would seem to be difficult, nay, impossible, to keep a rich man out.

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tion and *pardon of all acts of fornication,* committed by any of the clergy, in what manner soever, whether it be with a nun, within or without the limits of a nunnery, or with his relations in consanguinity or affinity, or with his god-daughter, or any woman whatsoever; and whether also the said absolution be given in the name of the clergyman himself alone, or of him jointly with his adultress; *together with a dispensation to enable him to take and hold* holy orders and ecclesiastical benefices, with a clause also of inhibition—costs 36 tournois, nine ducats." "The absolution of him who keeps a concubine, with a dispensation to take and hold his orders and benefices—costs 21 tournoies, five ducats, and six cerlins."

"A nun having committed fornication several times, within and without the bounds of the nunnery, shall be absolved, and enabled to hold all the dignities of her order, even that of abbess, by paying 36 tournois, nine ducats." Many more instances might be adduced, and may be found in Bayle's Dictionary, art. Banck Laurence; or in Laurence Banck's Taxa S. Cancellariæ Romanæ, from which the above is copied verbatim. The book was published by authority at Rome, Venice, Cologne, and Paris, and the editions of all these places are still extant, though they are now becoming rare, for it was prohibited, and its future publication stopped, immediately after the Protestants assigned it as a reason for rejecting the Council of Trent. Its authenticity is indisputable. The latest edition is of Paris, 1625.

The keys of that kingdom, we are told, were given to St Peter, and are held by the Pope; and he opens the door freely to those who pay the porter.

The poor, indeed, have but a bad chance of admittance, for their souls depend upon the collections of the good friars and penitents, that go about industriously begging, "Per le Anime Sante in Purgatorio;" and even this slender redeeming fund is shared with them by the rich. However, it is not always the wealthy alone that are saved. For, besides, the pilgrimages and visitations of altars, &c. &c., that are open to the industry of all; those that have interest with the Pope, may obtain an absolution in full from his Holiness, for all the sins they ever have committed, or may chuse to commit.*

St Peter's,—in common with the other three great Basilica of Rome, St John Lateran, St Maria Maggiore, and S. Paolo *fuore le Murà*,—possesses the privilege of the Porta Santa, or holy door, by which, during the holy year, all may come in, but none may come out. It is literally "that bourne through which no traveller returns."

These holy years and holy doors were originally invented by Boniface the Eighth, at the termination of the 13th century, who proclaimed a jubilee throughout the Christian world, with "plenary indulgence and remission of sins," to all who, in the course of that year, should visit the shrines of the apostles and martyrs of Christianity at Rome; and

* I have seen one of these edifying documents, issued by the present Pope to a friend of mine. It was most unequivocally worded,—but I was not permitted to take a copy.

commanded this festival to be held for evermore at the expiration of every century—in avowed imitation of the secular games of the Romans.* But it was found so lucrative to the Holy See, from the heaps of gold the piety of wealthy pilgrims poured on the altars, and so edifying to Christendom, that, instead of one, the number was gradually multiplied to four jubilees, or holy years, in every age.

Thus, after the holy doors have been walled up, and the brazen cross upon them devoutly pressed by the lips, and rubbed by the foreheads and chins of the pious, for five-and-twenty years, they are thrown open, and the Pope, followed by every good Christian, walks in to the four churches through them, but always walks out by some door —not holy.

The scramble among the devout for the bits of brick and mortar, when the walls of these holy doors are thrown down, I am assured is truly edifying.

We visited the Sacristy,—or rather, the three Sacristies of St. Peter's,—but I don't know why you should be made to undergo the description of them; therefore, I will only say that their spacious halls, and noble corridors and galleries of communication, correspond, in magnitude and splendour of decora-

* Vide Lettres sur les Jubilés.—These secular games, which I have already mentioned, (vide Letter XXV.,) were sacred to Apollo and Diana, for the safety of the empire, and celebrated with the most astonishing pomp and splendour,—generally at the end of a hundred, or a hundred and three years.

tion, with the church itself. This great building was erected by the late Pope (Pius the Sixth,) with a magnificence worthy of his spirit, but its architecture can merit no praise.

We had spent the whole morning in the church, and, indeed, on a winter's day, St Peter's is a delightful promenade. Its temperature seems like the happy islands, to experience no change. In the coldest weather, it is like summer to your feelings, and in the most oppressive heats, it strikes you with the delightful sensation of cold—a luxury not to be estimated but in a climate such as this. The rigours of cold may be easily ameliorated by artificial warmth, but neither nature nor invention has furnished us with any means of producing artificial cold, to mitigate the miseries of consuming heat.

We had intended ascending to the top of St Peter's to-day, but it was now too late to see the view to advantage, and we were too much wearied to enjoy it.

Your's, ever.

LETTER XLIII.

ASCENT TO THE TOP OF ST PETER'S.

You will stare when I tell you that a broad paved road leads up to the top of St Peter's Church; not, perhaps, practicable for carriages from its winding nature, but so excellent a bridle road, that there is a continual passage of horses and mules upon it, which go up laden with stones and lime; and the ascent is so gentle, and the road so good, that any body might ride up and down with perfect safety. The way is very long, and as I have not yet quite recovered my strength, I longed for a donkey to carry me up. But none was to be had, and I was compelled to walk; lamenting grievously that no other ass was to be found except myself; which wretched piece of wit I purposely repeat, that I may deprive you of the malicious pleasure of saying it.

Without the aid of the extra ass, then, I reached the roof at last, which seems like a city in itself.

Small houses, and ranges of work-shops for the labourers employed in the never-ending repairs of the Church, are built here, and are lost upon this immense leaden plain, as well as the eighteen cupolas of the side chapels of the Church, which are not distinguishable from below.

Though only comparatively small, how diminutive do they seem, compared to that stupendous dome, the triumph of modern architecture, in which is fulfilled the proud boast of Michael Angelo, that he would lift the vault of the Pantheon, and hang it in air! It is exactly of the same magnitude. Its beautiful proportions and finished grandeur, towering into heaven, can here be fully seen. From below they are lost, owing to being thrown back by the length of the Latin cross, and consequently sunk behind the mean elevation of the front, so that this noble dome is perhaps no where seen to so little advantage as from that point, in which it should appear to the most—the Piazza of St Peter's.

We rambled about, and rested ourselves on the marble seats which are commodiously placed upon the leads; and we might, I make no doubt, have made many grand and sublime meditations; but a ridiculous idea, which unluckily entered some of our heads, that the great cupola, with all the little ones about it, looked like a hen with a brood of chickens, completely put all such ideas to flight. "What simpletons must they have been that could find nothing better to think of on the top of St Peter's!" Methinks I hear you say.

We commenced the ascent of the great dome by

a succession of staircases, ingeniously contrived, and from which passages lead out both upon its internal and external galleries.

One of the former, like the whispering gallery of St Paul's,—as if to verify the proverb, that walls have ears,—carries round a sound inaudible to the nearest byestander, clear and distinct to a listener on the opposite side of its vast circumference.

We began to have some idea of the immense height we had already gained. The Mosaic figures of the saints and apostles, emblazoned on the vaulted roof, were now so near as to stare upon us in all their gigantic proportions, and from the highest gallery we looked down into the fearful depth of the church below, upon the minute forms of the human beings, who, like emmets, were creeping about in it.

How contemptible did they look from hence! And is that diminutive speck—that insignificant nothing—lost even in the mightiness of that fabric himself has raised—is that he, who has called forth these wonderful creations of art, and made nature subservient to his will, to adorn it with beauty and with majesty? Is that the being whose ambition would embrace the universe—whose littleness and greatness at once call forth contempt and admiration? Strange compound of a divinity and a brute—allied equally to the worm and to the god—made "but a little lower than the Angels;" and yet, but a little raised above the beasts that perish;—a creature of clay, endowed with a heavenly soul—a mortal, destined to immortality—Man is, indeed, "the

glory, jest, and riddle of the world!" But if I begin to moralize about man, we shall never get to the top of St Peter's.

In the course of our progress, we walked round the external cornice of the dome, which is so broad, that, though there is no fence round its edge, three or four persons might walk abreast with perfect safety. We were informed that it is half a mile in circumference; but I would not guarantee the truth of this statement.

At last, by flights of very narrow stairs, and long bending passages, sloping inwards to suit the inclination of the rapidly narrowing curve, we reached the summit of that astonishing dome, to which we had so often looked with admiration from below; and perched at a height above the flight of the fowls of heaven, we enjoyed the far extended and interesting prospect, over mountain, flood, and plain.

The beautiful amphitheatre of hills, which encloses the Campagna, stretching round the blue horizon on three sides; the pointed summits of the loftier Apennines behind, which alone were wreathed with snow,—as if Winter had enthroned himself there, looking sullenly down on the plains and verdant hills not subject to his sway;—the Tiber, in its long sinuous windings through the waste,—like a snake coiled up in the desert, betrayed by its glistening surface; far beyond it, the desolate spot where Ostia once stood, and where the silver waters of the Mediterranean were now gleaming in the sun-beams; Rome at our feet—her churches, her

palaces, her dark and distant ruins; the rich verdure and golden fruit of the orange gardens of her convents, far beneath us, contrasting with the deep shade of the mournful cypress;—such a scene as this, fanned with the pure fresh blowing gale, as mild and soft as the breath of summer, that delighted every sense, and canopied by that clear blue sky of ethereal brightness and beauty, that words can never paint—Such a scene as this would surely awaken some admiration, even in the coldest heart!

We enjoyed it in perfect security, the top of the dome being surrounded by a railing, which is undiscernible from below. We were at the base of the ball, which surmounts the dome, and forms its upper ornament, and certainly had no wish to emulate the adventurous French lady, recorded by Eustace, who climbed to the top of it; but, unfortunately for our peace, we had in our party a naval officer, who clambered up the aerial-looking ladder that is fixed round it, with as much ease as he would have run up the shrouds of a man of war, and not satisfied with this exploit, contrived, by some extraordinary process, to hoist himself up the smooth polished sides of the metallic cross, and actually seated himself upon its horizontal bar!

For his safety we entertained no fears. He had been rocked on the giddy mast, and cradled in the storm; but we trembled to see his example followed by almost all the gentlemen who were with us; not that there was any thing whatever to be gained, or seen by it, but that they would not on any

account be outdone; and then there was the future dear delight of boasting that they had stood on the top of the ball of St Peter's—cheaply purchased at the risk of breaking their neck. We were therefore doomed to see these silly men, one after another, go up this terrible place; about half of the way round the lower convexity of the ball, in a posture nearly horizontal, with their heads downwards,—much as a fly creeps along a ceiling; we observed the secret fear and agitation painted on their countenances, and knew that a moment's giddiness, a single false step, must precipitate them down a height that it was agony to think of—but we durst not speak. More lucky than wise, however, they all descended in safety, and we, resolving to do something in our turn, went up into the inside of the ball—an enterprize by no means difficult or dangerous, but somewhat tedious; one person only being able to ascend at once; and as our party was rather numerous, by the time the last had got up, the first was nearly baked to death; for this great brazen globe was heated by the powerful rays of an Italian sun, to the temperature of an oven. In this delightful situation we began "God save the King," in full chorus, but long before it was concluded, the loyalty of most of us had melted away, and we were almost tumbling over each other's heads down the narrow ladder—far more eager to get out than we had ever been to get in.

Although this ball looks from below no larger than an apple, it can contain in the inside about

eighteen people, and we calculated that even more might be packed in it,—if they did not suffocate.

It is impossible to form any idea of the immensity of St Peter's, without going to the top.

The long-winding paved road that ascends to the leads, as if to the summit of a mountain; the amazing extent of roof; the vast scale on which every thing is constructed; the endless height to which you afterwards climb by staircases and ascending passages to the top of the dome, from which, as if from heaven, you look down on the earth, scarcely able to discern the human beings upon its surface; all this, indeed, may give you some idea of its stupendous size, which from below you can never conceive,—and which, I am sure, my description will never make you understand.—So, adieu!

LETTER XLIV.

SANTA MARIA MAGGIORE—S. PAOLO.

The Basilica, which holds the third rank in Rome, is that of Santa Maria Maggiore. It stands on the highest of the two summits of the Esquiline Hill,* and is believed to occupy the site of the ancient Temple and Grove of Juno Lucina, an opinion which seems to have derived its origin from a black and white Mosaic pavement, which was found at an inconsiderable depth below the pavement of the church, during some alterations made in it in the time of Benedict the Fourteenth, and was attributed to that temple.

In the fourth century, an old Pope was instructed in the proper situation for this church, by a miraculous shower of snow, that fell in the middle of summer, exactly covering the spot. I suppose his Holiness must have correctly imitated, in the building, every dent and curvature of the snow,

* It is called L'Oppio; the other, occupied by the Church of SS. Martino e Sylvestro, is called Il Cispio.

for nothing else could account for the eccentricity of its external shape. It would puzzle an able geometrician to define to what figure it belonged. It can only be described by negatives. It is not long, nor square, nor round, nor oval, nor octagonal—nor yet triangular,—though it approaches the nearest to that of any thing. Nobody could suspect it of being a church, but for the deformity of an old brick belfrey, which sticks up in a singularly awkward position from the roof. It has more faces than Janus, and they resemble each other in nothing but their ugliness. In the advance of one of these, stands the solitary marble column, brought from the Temple of Peace, and erected by a pious Pope on a disproportioned pedestal. The other boasts one of the Egyptian obeliscs, that stood before the Mausoleum of Augustus.

The inside of the church owes all its beauty to its ancient Ionic columns, which are supposed to have belonged to the Temple of Juno Lucina. The roof of the nave is tawdry, flat, and low. The graceful line of the colonnade is broken by arches, that open into lateral chapels of rival magnificence. The least dazzling is that of Sixtus V., but then it contains a tomb, in which lies the body of that pontiff, miraculously unchanged by death, and working great and unceasing miracles. So, at least, I was informed.

The splendour of the opposite Borghese Chapel, so far surpasses my feeble powers of description, that I shall leave it all to your imagination, to which you may give abundance of latitude, for it

can scarcely surpass the reality. It contains one of St Luke's precious performances—a miraculous image of the Virgin—but those who, like me, have been blessed with the sight of many of that Evangelist's works, will probably prefer the paintings of Guido, the only ones worth seeing in the whole church, though even they will not particularly reward the observer.

Poor Cigoli went mad, in consequence of Paul V.'s refusal to allow him to obliterate his paintings on the dome of this church, which he ardently desired, in order that he might endeavour to execute something more worthy of his genius.

You may be sensible of the obligations you owe me for my moderation, in respect to this church, when I tell you that a description of it has been published in a large folio volume! I had nearly left it, without telling you that it contains the real cradle of Jesus Christ; or, as the Custode reluctantly confessed, half of the real cradle only.

The fourth great Basilica of Rome, San Paola *fuore le Murà*, is about a mile beyond the gate to which it now gives its name—anciently the Porta Ostiensis. Before we came to it, we passed on the left of the road, an old bastion built by one of the Popes, which a gentleman, who happened to be with us—(a great connoisseur,) mistaking for a Roman ruin, favoured us with a learned dissertation upon, and even praised this piece of antiquity at the expence of the buildings of modern days!

We passed, on our right, the verdant, but unnatural-looking height of Monte Testaccio, which,

incredible as it may seem, is really entirely formed of broken fragments of earthern ware, the refuse of ancient neighbouring potteries; so that this feature of nature is much more modern than many of the ruins around it. From its loose and porous composition, it acts, as if formed by Wedgwood for a great wine-cooler, and serves as the cellar of all Rome. The wine-merchants have excavated vaults in it to keep their stores cool, and every morning a quantity sufficient for the daily demand is brought into the city.

Leaving the grey Pyramid of Caius Cestius, and the Protestant burying-ground on our right, we drove through the Porta San Paola, from whence it is said a covered portico formerly extended to the Basilica; * but no trace of it now remains, and nothing meets the eye but ruined tombs—monuments of man's vain longings after immortality; or paltry chapels and crucifixes that record miracles by the way-side—memorials of his abject superstition.

We crossed the classic Almo, flowing down to finish its "brief course" in the Tiber, and soon after stopped at the old Basilica of St Paul, which was originally built by Constantine, above the tomb of that martyred apostle; was nearly, if not entirely, rebuilt by Honorius; was restored by St Leo after the shock of an earthquake; and was subsequently repaired, enlarged, and beautified by a

* Procopius de Bell. Got.

long succession of pious Pontiffs, whose success, I am sorry to say, has been by no means proportioned to their industry; for, amongst all the ugly churches of Rome, this is remarkable for its surpassing ugliness. In vain have they adorned its exterior with huge Mosaic saints, or stuck upon its front the excrescence of a portico, or given to its entrance costly gates of bronze brought from Constantinople,—on which the figure of their donor, a Roman Consul of the eleventh century, appears kneeling before an image of the Blessed Virgin; in vain have they exhausted all their art, and all their wealth,—the hopeless meanness of the Secoli Bassi still clings inseparably to it, and it is one of the many instances, that the most splendid materials and ornaments are insufficient to produce architectural beauty, unless combined by the hand of taste.

Perhaps no edifice in the world can vie with this in the number and beauty of the majestic columns which adorn its interior. A hundred and twenty pillars, of the rarest marble and granite, the spoils of the ancient world, at once burst upon your view,—and yet it is like an old barn. You raise your eyes from the Grecian beauty of the long colonnades that divide its fine receding aisles, and behold a range of black worm-eaten rafters, through which, far above, appears the inside of the bare tiled roof; for, be it known to you, that this hideous old church, to adorn which some of the noblest edifices of antiquity have been levelled with the dust, never had a ceiling! Nor has it quite half a

pavement, and that half is composed of marble inscriptions broken to pieces! But the columns—the beautiful columns—we turn our eyes to with sorrow! Instead of their fine Corinthian entablature, a huge weight of dead bare wall, scooped out into mean little arches, barbarously rests upon their polished shafts. The portraits of forgotten Popes, mouldering on the mildewed walls—the gaunt figures of the old grim saints, in barbarous Mosaic above the altars—all else is in such strange contrast with the majesty of these matchless columns, that one cannot but wish to knock down the horrible old fabric in which they are shrouded, and restore them to light and beauty.

Twenty-four of these beautiful fluted Corinthian columns of Pavonazzetto marble, nearly forty feet in height, and formed out of a single block, with bases and capitals of Parian marble, it is said, were taken from the Mausoleum of Hadrian, and are indisputably amongst the finest in the world. Two columns of Saline marble, (white, semi-transparent, and crystallized,) fifty feet in height, and various columns of Cipollino, of Parian marble, and of Oriental granite, attract the eye on all sides with their rarity and beauty.

The entrance to this church is at the upper end, a contrivance happily adapted to destroy the effect of the long colonnade. From the lower end we were taken into the cloister of the convent, which is in the true taste of the barbarous ages. The lay brother who introduced us with much affected mystery, took infinite pains to make us hold

our tongues, declaring it to be against the rules for females to enter, and pretending to tremble lest the monks should overhear us. He said there were thirty-one Benedictines in the convent, but that in summer the malaria obliged them to desert it.

Above a mile further from Rome, on the same road, is the Church of S. Paola *alle tre Fontane*, built on the spot of the apostle's martyrdom, and above the three fountains which miraculously spouted forth at the three rebounds which his head made after being struck off, and which miraculously continue to flow to this day, for the satisfaction of the sceptical. Not being one of the number, I have passed the spot several times without stopping to look at them. I shall therefore only observe, that it would perhaps have been a more beneficial miracle, if the apostle's head had dried up the ground, instead of making it more watery, in a spot which, from its extreme marshiness, and immediate vicinity to the flat oozy bed of the Tiber, is so unhealthy as to be now a desert.

We were also shown a spot, where we were assured ten thousand Christian martyrs were beheaded in one day; and passed a church, where indulgences for ten thousand years may be purchased in one moment.

LETTER XLV.

BASILICA SANTA CROCE AND S. LORENZO.

THE Church of Santa Croce in Gierusalemme, stands on the lonely expanse of the Esquiline Hill, close by the walls of Rome, and near the ruined arches of the Claudian Aqueduct. It is one of the seven Basilica of Rome, and was built by Santa Helena, the Mother of Constantine the Great. Unspeakable are the obligations the Catholic world lies under to this exemplary Saint and Empress; not only for bringing into the world the first Christian Emperor, but for going all the way to Jerusalem, on purpose to make the discovery of the true Cross, (which nobody on the spot had been able to find for three hundred years,) and bringing it to this church, where every true believer may see it. But she only deposited one third of this precious relic here, and what she did with the other two-thirds I have entirely forgot. Every year, on the

Holy Thursday and Friday of Passion Week, this portion of the true Cross is unveiled to the eyes of the Faithful. I missed the opportunity, and shall now never see it. But I saw instead, the cradle of the *Bambino* at Santa Maria Maggiore, which I have already mentioned; and, in fact, it was quite an unexpected pleasure to me, for, as the Bible says, the child was laid in a manger, I was surprised when the priest assured me it was laid in this very cradle as soon as it was born—so having seen more than the wise men of the east did, who went on purpose, I thought I had every reason to be satisfied. The Empress Helena not only forwarded the Holy Cross and the cradle, from the Holy Land, but the crown of thorns, and all the nails used in the crucifixion, and some of the sponge, and a phial of the Virgin Mary's tears, and a piece of her green gown, and some drops of the blood of Christ, and the miraculous impression of his face upon St Veronica's handkerchief; together with many other relics of inestimable sanctity: and these light articles were ballasted by a whole cargo of the holy earth from the sepulchre.

The only motive I could ever discover for the memorable journey of the image of the Virgin and the Holy House from Palestine to Loretto, was the desire to rejoin these, its parted treasures; and really it is not wonderful, that when the Virgin found they were all gone,—even to her petticoat, and that she was left alone in her house for so many ages, she should grow discontented, and set off in pursuit of them. I am only surprised she did not

undertake the journey sooner. But it would seem, unfortunately, that the Santa Casa is only calculated for crossing the sea, and that it cannot conveniently travel by land, else it certainly would not have stopped on the coast, without coming on to join those long-lost relics at Rome. I fear, indeed, that it would experience some difficulty in getting over the Appenines.

It is clear, however, that Santa Helena had no intention of giving offence to the Virgin Mary by the repeated ship-loads of relics she dispatched from the Holy Land to Rome; and it seems to me surprising, and I must say somewhat ungrateful, that, after all her activity and industry in collecting them, and after all the churches she built, that no church should ever have been raised to herself.

But whatever gratitude devout Catholics ought to feel towards Santa Helena, for her laudable exertions in building up Christian temples, some contumacious Protestants will persist in wishing that she had shown less zeal in pulling down the monuments of Paganism, of which she certainly was not sparing; as this, and every other old church in Rome testify; for they are adorned with the spoils of antiquity, and filled with the magnificent columns of ruined temples and porticos.

The present front of the Santa Croce in Gierusalemme, is the erection of the last century, and reflects no great honour upon its architectural taste.

In what may be called the anti-room, or vestibule to the church, are two columns of *Marmo di Biga*, (a marble of a beautiful iron-grey colour.)

In the church itself are eight magnificent ancient columns of Oriental granite. Two of the columns that support the canopy of the altar, are of a very rare marble, called Occhio di Pavone,—peacock's eye marble; and beneath the altar, the beautiful bagnaruola, as the Italians call it; the Labrum, or bath of some ancient Roman, formed out of one block of basalt; now serves as a coffin for Christian martyrs.

The Convent of the Santa Croce, deserted by its monks, is now converted into a Reclusorio for females. Moved by the spirit of curiosity, which leads our sex to pry into all things, we went into this place, and found ourselves among a multitude of women, all idle, and all talking or rather screaming together, in that tone of indescribable shrillness, in which Roman females usually carry on their colloquies. I assure you, that one single voice is scarcely endurable by unaccustomed ears. Conceive then what must be the effect of five hundred at once! For there were actually five hundred women shut up together, and only one man to keep them in order! Like those exposed to the sound of the falls of Niagara, this poor creature's ears were so stunned with the merciless din of their voices, that he is actually as deaf as a post. Never shall I forget the clamours of their five hundred tongues. The gentlemen of our party only got as far as the door,—the moment it was opened, at the first burst of sounds that issued forth, they instinctively clapped their hands to their ears and fled.

The Basilica of St Sebastian, *fuore le Murà*,

from which we descended into the Catacombs, I have already mentioned; and, except that it is one of the seven Basilica of Rome, it is not worth notice.

The last of the seven Basilica, St Lorenzo *fuore le Murà*, stands about a mile from the Porta San Lorenzo, the ancient name of which has excited discord, long and loud, amongst the antiquarians; and whether it was Porta Inter Aggeres, or Porta Exquilina, or Porta Tiburtina, I pretend not to say; except that, as the Basilica was certainly built on the Via Tiburtina,* which was then as it is now, the road to Tibur, or Tivoli, it affords a presumption, that the gate leading to it was the Porta Tiburtina. Constantine the Great erected this Basilica above the tomb of the martyred St. Lorenzo, (who, you will remember, was broiled to death upon a gridiron at Rome,) and of St Stephen, the first martyr, who was stoned to death at Jerusalem; though how his body, which was buried at that place by devout men,† comes to be deposited here, is not very clearly explained.

The Basilica was, for the most part, rebuilt in the sixth, and it is believed, in the eighth century also; and the internal part, containing the confession, or tomb of the saint, is alone of the original erection. It is distinguished by ten magnificent columns of Pavonazzetta marble, buried nearly to

* Anastasius, in the Life of San Sylvestro. See Nardini, who quotes the passage.

† Acts, chap. viii. v. 2.

the top of their shafts below the pavement of this vile old church. The capitals of two of them are composite, adorned with sculptured trophies, instead of foliage; the rest are Corinthian. They support a second order of mean little columns; and a gallery, which was customary in all the earliest churches, as well as in the Roman Basilica. The marble pulpits, or reading desks, stand on each side of the church. On the right hand side, in walking up the nave, is the Ionic column, with a frog and a lizard sculptured on the capital, which Winkelman, and all the critics after him, declare to be the identical column that Pliny says was so marked by the two Spartan architects, Battrocus and Saurus, to perpetuate their names;* and consequently it must have been brought here from the Temple of Jove, in the Portico of Octavia.

There are two Christian tombs in this church, adorned with Bacchanalian images; one is behind the altar, and another, representing the vintage, is near the door. Immediately on the right of the door, on entering, there is, however, a far more beautiful sarcophagus, which contains the bones of an old cardinal, but is adorned with a Roman Marriage, sculptured in bas relief. You see the preparatory sacrifice,—the bridegroom, and the bride, attended by her train of Paranymphæ, or bride maids, united by the Genius of Love; and above, all the assembled deities that bless or prosper the marriage state.

* See Letter XXVIII., on the Portico of Octavia.

By way of a specimen of the fine arts of a later and lower period, in the Mosaic pavement in the middle of the church, you will see two Roman soldiers, of the barbarous ages, on horseback—most extraordinary figures!—Or, better still, admire in the external portico of the church, some fresco paintings nearly washed out, representing, amongst other things, the Pope and Cardinals, apparently warming themselves by the flames of purgatory, and the souls burning in them, some of which are lifted out by the hair of their heads, by black angels in red petticoats, looking thoroughly singed. This exquisite composition is in commemoration of the privilege enjoyed by one particular subterranean chapel in this church, of liberating the souls in purgatory—for money. It is a sort of office for the transaction of the business. Not that it enjoys a monopoly of it by any means, for almost every church is engaged in it; but it has the reputation of carrying it on to the best advantage, and has by far the most custom. I am acquainted with a Roman lady, who gave up annually one half of her income for many years to the monks of this convent, for masses to free the soul of her son.

LETTER XLVI.

ST CLEMENT'S AND ST AGNES.

You, like the pious pilgrim, have now made your duteous round of the Seven Basilica of Rome; but, not like him, have you thereby gained any indulgence for your soul,—for, in all probability, you have found it a passage through purgatory, instead of a deliverance from it. Nor are your labours, like his, at an end; for there are, alas! churches behind in long array, remarkable for their antiquity, their singularity, or their works of art, which must be included in the pilgrimage of Taste,—though they may be omitted in that of Piety.

Resigned to your hard fate, therefore, enter with becoming reverence the Church of St Clement, which has the reputation of being the most ancient existing church in the world, and is certainly one of the most curious.

The court before it, enclosed with a wall, and surrounded with a portico, much resembles the

Cavædium, in front of ancient dwelling-houses, but answers more properly to the portico and area of temples, and was generally attached to all the primitive Christian churches.

In the interior, this church has not the form of the Cross. Built before the worship of the Divinity had been superseded by that of human beings, it has evidently been intended to have only one altar, which is isolated, elevated on a lofty platform, and divided from the rest of the church by two small gates, opening on the flights of steps that ascend to it. This part is called the Sanctuary. In the body of the church, a space, called the Nartex, or Presbyterium, is enclosed with walls of white marble, on each side of which are raised the two Ambones, or marble pulpits, used for reading the lessons; the whole is inlaid and tessilated with porphyry, and other coloured stones.

I forgot to say that this church stands on the slope of the Esquiline, near the Baths of Titus, that it was built by Constantine, and has never been rebuilt, though various Popes have exercised themselves in ornamenting it, with all the laborious littleness of the low ages. Amongst other instances of this, I observed a mosaic pillar.

We were shown the tomb of a Cardinal, dated 1478, with the Thyrsis and Crotole of Bacchus, the Pan's pipes, and such Bacchanalian devices, sculptured upon it—a proof how long these Pagan ornaments were tolerated on the monuments of Christians. Indeed, many old sepulchres of the saints,

found in the catacombs, are inscribed with *Diis Manibus*,* or more frequently with the initial letters D. M. I remarked one of these in an old church, and asked a capuchin why these letters were on a Christian tomb. He evidently did not understand their import; for, after puzzling himself a little to consider what they could mean, he said, D. stood for Dom, (the title given to an Abate,) and M. must be the initial letter of his name. When told D. M. stood for *Diis Manibus*, he thought we meant some man, and said, with a true Italian shrug, he had never heard of *him!*

Masaccio's fresco of St Catherine, painted in one of the chapels which improvers have given this church, is supposed to have been re-touched, but his Evangelists on the roof certainly have not. These are the only undoubted works I have ever seen of that great Florentine's, and are highly interesting in the history of the art. Marked, as they are, with all the stiff formality—the total ignorance of design, perspective, grouping, and composition, inseparable from these Gothic times; they were, for those times, wonderful productions. That distinguished man soared far above the vile barbarisms of his age. Nearly half a century before Andrea di Mantegna, and Leonardo da Vinci flourished, or Buonarotti was born; he shone a solitary luminary; and was the first, after the long night

* Roma Sacra, Martinelli.

that followed the era of Cimabue and Giotto, to pierce its darkness with a ray of genius; but its promise was soon obscured. Masaccio died young, not without strong suspicions of having been poisoned.

A great proportion of the monks of this convent are English, or, rather, I believe, Irish; but English, Irish, and even Scotch, are to be found in many of the cloisters of Rome. Often, in my wanderings, have I been startled to hear my native accents in this foreign land, breathed from the mouth of a bearded capuchin.

If St Clement's be the oldest church in Rome, or in the world, St Agnes's cannot be much its junior; for it is also an undoubted erection of Constantine's, and stands in the Via Nomentana, close to the tomb, now the church, of that Emperor's daughter, Santa Costanza, which I have (thank Heaven!) already described.

The Church of St Agnes was built on the level of the catacombs in which the body of the saint was found, consequently it is a considerable depth below the surface of the earth, and you descend into it by a marble staircase, from the sides of which were taken the bas reliefs of Perseus liberating Andromeda, and Endymion sleeping, now in the Palazzo Spada; duplicates of those in the Capitol.

The interior of the Church of St Agnes, more than any other, preserves the form of the ancient profane Basilica. The three naves, separated by

sixteen ancient marble columns, and the form of the tribune at the top, beneath which the great altar now stands, and the judge formerly sat; may be distinctly seen in most of the old Roman churches; but the peculiarity of this is the gallery, which was occupied by the audience in the Pagan Basilica, and by the women in the religious assemblies of the early Christians,—a custom, by the way, still in use among the Jews; at least, in the only one of their synagogues I ever entered, that at Rome.

The Churches of St Clement and St Agnes are both very curious old structures, and well worth a visit; but though built in the same age, and destined for the same purpose, their plan is totally different. St Clement has not the gallery of St Agnes; nor has St Agnes the enclosed Presbyterium, the Ambones, or the elevated and fenced-off altar of St Clement's. The theory, therefore, that would reduce all ancient churches to one invariable design, is evidently false; and yet there are antiquaries, even in Rome, with these examples of diversity staring them in the face, that maintain this doctrine.

The columns that sustain the naves of both churches, are, as usual, antique. Among those of St Agnes, are some rare columns of Porta Santa marble, and some of beautiful Pavonazzetta. In one of the chapels there is a curious ancient candelabra, which you vainly try to look at with attention, for, close behind it, stands a head of Christ, by Michael Angelo Buonarotti. All the sculptured

representations of our Saviour are thought to bear a strong resemblance to those of Marcus Aurelius; and, in this instance, I fancied I perceived it, though I should never have been struck with it, unless it had been pointed out to me.

As to its merits, I dare not censure, and I cannot praise. It is fine; but it is not what I had expected from Buonarotti. Perhaps there is no other head of Christ so good; but still it falls so far short of the image embodied in our imagination, that we strongly feel the inefficiency of art, when this is all that the greatest of modern artists could achieve.

In the personification of our Saviour, sculpture, in my opinion, has never soared so high as painting.

The Statue of Saint Agnes on the great altar, is an eked out ancient Torso of Oriental alabaster; but this beautiful material, from its clouded semi-transparency, is wholly unfit for the purposes of sculpture, and was never employed among the ancients till Magnificence usurped the place of true Taste.

Behind this church and the Mausoleum of Santa Costanza, is an old building of an oval, or rather an oblong form, with the corners rounded off, which is generally called the Hippodrome of Constantine; but it seems to me the work of even later and more barbarous ages. Whenever built, it is most probably that it was a Hippodrome, but it has also been called a Prætorian camp, a stadium,

and an ancient Christian burial-place. Its area is now a vineyard, and its high and broken walls, luxuriantly overgrown with ivy, have a highly picturesque appearance.

LETTER XLVII.

ST STEFANO ROTONDO.

THE Church of St Stefano Rotondo stands on the most western summit of the deserted Cœlian Hill, surrounded with the majestic arches of the ruined Claudian Aqueduct,* which it seems rapidly following to decay.

This old church is extremely difficult of access; the malaria has driven away every inhabitant of the adjacent buildings, and as service is never performed here except on festas, and then but rarely, you may often knock both long and loudly at its gates in vain.

It is a very singular building, of a circular form, surrounded in the whole of its interior circumference with two ranges of columns, which form its sole beauty and attraction. But, notwithstanding these,—notwithstanding its manifold pretensions to antiquity,—notwithstanding that it lays claim to the title of the Temple of Claudius, of Faunus, of Bacchus, of Jupiter Pellegrinus, and of every other

* Or rather of its continuation from the Porta Maggiore to the brink of this hill, by Nero.

temple which ever stood upon this mount,—and failing these, to the lower dignities of a public bath, or a butcher market,*—it must be content to be ranked among the erections of the low ages. It was built—there is no denying it—by Simplicius, Pope and Saint, in the year of our Lord 467. It has, indeed, been conjectured, and, I think, with much probability, that this church has been raised upon the substructions of some ancient edifice of the same plan, and the same beautiful spherical form, which it is not likely that either the aforesaid Pope, or any of the Popes and Architects of those days, would have had taste enough to have devised of themselves. But how this building, with all its meanness and incongruity, could ever have been mistaken for a work of Roman times,—how any one could ever look at the very structure of its walls, or on the congregation of its columns of all sorts, sizes, orders, and styles, and not at once recognise it for a work posterior to the age of Constantine,—I am at a loss to conceive! Yet in spite of the intrinsic evidence of the building itself, and the recorded date of its erection, there are still to be found those who adhere to the belief that it is the Temple of Claudius converted into a Christian Church. Such persons I would counsel to look well at it, and then at the Coliseum; because, if their supposition be true, they must be works of

* A macellum for the sale of meat, &c. of which there were two in Rome. The Macellum Magnum, which stood on this mount, was built by Augustus.

the same age,—for the Temple of Claudius was rebuilt by Vespasian,* and if, upon comparison, the similarity of style should not seem to be very striking, they will, perhaps, be disposed to leave St Simplicius all the merit of its erection, which is so justly his due.

But we by no means see it in the state in which he left it, for all the alterations and beautifications of this building (and they have been many) by subsequent Saints, Bishops, and Popes, are duly recorded in Papal history.

Nicholas V., I believe, confined his emendations to walling up the outer circle of columns,—a tasteful improvement certainly!—but one said to have been necessary to ensure its stability. Luckily, no other Pope thought of doing the same by the inner circle, which still remains.

The columns are evidently the spoils of many an ancient edifice, and they are all that are ancient here. Even the capitals of many of them are in the same villainous style, and doubtless of the same age, as the rest of the building. Upon two of them the cross is sculptured.

The whole circle of walled-up columns, as well as the two, that stand by themselves in the centre, are made to support arches,—a barbarism in architecture which was unheard of till the age of Constantine. Certainly Christianity and bad taste were established together,—if I may be forgiven so profane a remark.

* Suetonius in Vit.

San Stefano on the outside is undeniably hideous, being nothing but a round brick building, with a roof of indescribable ugliness. The inside, however, it has been justly observed, has an air of elegance and even of grandeur, which it owes entirely to the uneffaceable beauty of a simple circular colonnade, that all the intrinsic meanness and deformity of the rest of the edifice, and indeed of its own details of execution, are insufficient to destroy.

Nothing can be conceived more damp, dreary, and desolate, than this deserted church. It is surrounded with horrible frescos of horrible martyrdoms, which it is almost martyrdom to look at. Yet from the extreme dampness and chillness of this dismal old church, the red-hot fires that abound in them, have almost lost their power of appalling sinners; and I caught myself involuntarily looking at the flames, and thinking how very comfortable they would be,—nay, even St John, who was boiling in a pot of oil over a large fire, did not excite nearly so much pity as his situation would otherwise have done.

LETTER XLVIII.

THE HOUSE OF PILATE.

AMONG the remaining monuments of the middle ages of Rome, we must include one which deserves to be classed with them in style, if not in date; a curious old brick dwelling, near the Ponte Rotto, bedizened with incongruous ornaments of all kinds and ages, and known by the appellation of "The House of Pilate."

You may perhaps conceive, that, as the house of the Virgin Mary travelled from Jerusalem to Loretto, the House of Pilate has arrived by the same route at Rome. But you are mistaken. The Santa Casa is, as far as I know, the only mansion endowed with this faculty of locomotion, and "The House of Pilate" stands where it did.

No one, I believe, ever really imagined it to be the House of Pilate, who, if he ever had a house in Rome at all, had probably a much better one.

On the contrary, it is known to be the house of Cola, or Nicola Rienzi, the patriot, deliverer, tribune, and tyrant of Rome, in the 14th century; and

by what inexplicable absurdity it has obtained the name of the House of Pilate, it is impossible to conceive; unless from the cruel and iniquitous judgments that disgraced the conclusion of Rienzi's reign, he may, himself, have acquired that nickname among the people of Rome, who delight in these characteristic appellations, and very seldom call a man by any name of his own chusing. But this idea is only the birth of the moment, and I do not insist upon your adopting it.

The inscription upon the house is pretty much in the same style as the building.

L.C.L.T.N.R.S.O.C.N.S.T. N.T.S.C.L.P.T.F.G.R.S. T.R.S.H.
P.N.T.T. † Non fuit ignarus cujus domus hic Nicolaus N.I.C.D.
R.S.H.P. Quod nil momenti sibi mundi gloria sentit. D.T.
R.T.G. Verum quod fecit hanc non tam vana coegit. D.D.
V.B. Gloria quam Rome veterem renovare decorem. F.S.
† In domibus pulcris memor estote sepulcris.
Confisique tiu non ibi stare diu.
Mors vehitur pennis. Nulli sua vita perennis;
Mansio nostra brevis cursus et ipse levis.
Si fugias ventum si Claudas Ostia centum.
Lisgor mille Iubes non sine morte cubes.
Si maneas castris ferme vicin Iș et astris.
Ocius inde solet tollere quosque volet.
† Surgit in astra domus sublimis. culmina cujus.
Primus de primis magnus Nicholaus ab imis.
Erexit patrum decus ob renovare suorum.
Stat Patris crescens matrisque Theodora nomen.
† Hoc culmen clarum caro de pignere gessit.
Davidi Tribuit qui Pater exhibvit.

On the architrave of one of the windows is inscribed,

ADSV. ROMANIS. GRANDIS. HONOR. POPULIS.

The initial letters at the top are now become a kind of conundrum. They are supposed to have designated his multifarious titles, or rather epithets, then well known, because they prefaced all his acts, but of which a few only have floated down, disjointed, to posterity. "Nicholas, severe and merciful, Deliverer of Rome, Defender of Italy, Friend of Liberty and Mankind—of Peace and Justice, Tribune August." These seem to us almost sufficient, but they were not nearly the whole. One row of the above letters has been thus expounded:

N.	T.	S.	C.	L.	P.
Nicholas.	Tribunus.	Severus.	Clemens.	Liberator.	Patriæ.
T.	F.	G.	R.	S.	
Teuthonici.	Filius.	Gabrinius.	Romæ.	Servador.	

The rest have not even been guessed at. How little did the imperious Tribune think how soon these self-bestowed titles of his fame and power would become unknown hieroglyphics! Gabrini, (mentioned in the inscription,) was his proper name. But sirnames to this day are little in use at Rome. Familiar abbreviations of Christian names are alone current among the people, and the Tribune was known only by his *patronymic* of Cola di Rienzi; *Cola*, for Nicola, his own name, and *Rienzi*, for Lorenzo or Crescenzo, that of his father. It is not very certain which of the latter belonged to the honest publican, who gave "the patriot" birth. He is called by the one in the inscription,—by the other in the life of Rienzi. But as the same abbreviation (Cola) answers to both, the mistake is not very won-

derful,—nor is it to be supposed that much pains would be taken to ascertain its correct root, by the biographer of his son, who did not write till even *his* name had almost sunk into oblivion.*

From this trifling discrepancy, however, it has been doubted and denied, that this is the house of the famous—or infamous Tribune. But it is folly to imagine there ever could have been two of the same name, to whom such an inscription could apply; and if the Nicholas, proprietor of this house, was one unknown to fame—why any inscription at all?

There never was any thing more disfigured with decoration than this house. It is exactly such as would please the known taste of the Roman Tribune. It is composed of heterogeneous scraps of ancient marble sculpture, patched up with barbarous brick pilasters of his own age; affording an apt exemplification of his own character, in which piecemeal fragments of Roman virtue, and attachment to feudal state—abstract love of liberty, and practice of tyranny—formed as incongruous a compound.

The brightness of the early dawn of "*the good estate,*" established by the talents of Rienzi, and hailed with enthusiasm by the genius of his friend Petrarch, presented a striking contrast to its dark and premature close, hurried on by his own corruptions. One cannot estimate very highly that

* Vit. di Col. Rienzi, ap. il Muratori, tom. iii. Art. Ital.

virtue which was not proof against an administration of seven months, for within that period his wondrous course was run. The author of a bloodless revolution, he subverted by his energy and eloquence, the tyranny of ages, in a single day. On the 20th of May, 1347, he was hailed Tribune of the Roman people by the enthusiastic citizens; expelled at a word the haughty Feudal Barons; reduced them to obedience, and even humility; established "the good estate," and restored to the Mistress of the World her ancient freedom and justice —equal rights and equal laws.

On the 2d of August, having laid on a bed of state during the preceding night, within the Baptistery of St John, and bathed in its hallowed font, he appeared in the morning invested with the sword and gilt spurs of knighthood, and clad in robes of imperial purple—a sceptre in his hand. Then, in the face of the assembled multitude, he imperiously summoned to the throne on which he was seated, Pope Clement XII., from his palace at Avignon, and the royal candidates for the empire of Germany, from their kingdoms; and waving his sword to all the three quarters of the then known world, proclaimed them to be his own.

A few days afterwards, his solemn coronation took place in the Church of St John Lateran's, and before the altar of God, and by the hands of His holy servant, Rienzi was invested with the seven crowns of the Holy Ghost, emblematic of the seven gifts of the Spirit, which he pretended to have received from Heaven.

On the 15th of December, in the same year, deposed, disgraced, proscribed—neither his sword, stained with noble blood—nor his self-conferred honours of knighthood—nor his seven-fold crowns —nor yet his miraculous mission of the Holy Ghost—saved him from wandering in disguise, in poverty, and in exile, through the world he had so lately claimed as his own, or protected him from the *mercy* of that Emperor* whom he had so insolently summoned to his own tribunal, and by whom he was now consigned to imprisonment and chains.

After *seven* years of confinement, which (as if his fated number,) form a curious coincidence with the *seven* months of his reign, and the *seven* crowns of the Holy Ghost, to which he made pretence— he was once more restored to liberty and to power, and sent by the same papal authority which had before excommunicated him, as senator to Rome, —the supporter of that tyranny which he had before subverted.

But even this second inglorious gleam of greatness was soon closed. The barons and the citizens —the clergy and the laity—united against the plebeian tyrant,—the upstart noble,—the blasphemous prophet. "The doors of the Capitol were destroyed with axes and with fire, and while the senator attempted to escape in a plebeian garb, he

* Charles the Fourth.

was dragged to the platform of his palace—the fatal scene of his judgments and executions;"* and after enduring the protracted tortures of suspence and insult, he was pierced with a thousand daggers, amidst the execrations of the people.

Rienzi was one of those, as Madame de Staël happily observed, "Qui ont pris les souvenirs pour les esperances."

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* Decline and Fall, vol. xii. p. 322.

LETTER XLIX.

TOR' DI CONTI, TORRE DELLE MILEZIE; OR THE TOWER OF NERO AND OF TRAJAN.

THERE are two old towers, not worth wasting many words upon,—works of the low ages, and built by some of the Conti family, whose name indeed they bear.* They are said to have been erected by Pope Innocent III. in the 13th, though, according to some accounts, one of them was built by one Pandolfo di Suburra in the 11th, century. They are supposed to have been intended for soldiery, and the common name of one of them is, to this day, Torre delle Milezie; but, if meant as fortresses, it seems strange that they should have been placed at the base, instead of the summit, of the loftiest of the Seven Hills, and they have still less appearance of having been intended for military quarters.

The Tor' di Conti, being considered in danger of falling, was partially pulled down by Urban

* Vide Nardini. Roma Antica, lib. 3. c. 15. lib. 4. c. 6.

VIII. In the rage for antiquities, it has been imputed to Trajan, whose memory has been loaded with the opprobrium of having built this hideous old brick tower as a station for a military guard over his Forum. The other is generally called the Tower of Nero, and pointed out to strangers, on their first arrival, as the post from which Nero beheld Rome in flames; although Tacitus says that Emperor was stationed in his own theatre on the Esquiline, and this tower is at the foot of the Quirinal Hill.

People pass through two regular courses of study at Rome,—the first in learning, and the second in unlearning.

"This is the Tower of Nero, from which he saw the city in flames,—and this is the Temple of Concord,—and this is the Temple of Peace,—and this is the Temple of Castor and Pollux,—and this is the Temple of Vesta,—and these are the Baths of Paulus Æmilius, and so on," says your lacquey.

"This is not the Tower of Nero,—nor that the Temple of Concord,—nor the other the Temple of Peace,—nor are any of these things what they are called," says your antiquary.

You are then led an *ignis fatuus* chace through quartos of uncertainty and folios of despond, and vainly deem you shall reach the light of truth, which

"Allures from far, but as you follow, flies,"

till at last, fatigued and bewildered, you desist from

the ineffectual pursuit, and find yourself, after all your toil, exactly where you first set out.

We have now contemplated, not only the ruins of Ancient Rome, which will be viewed with veneration while one stone stands upon another, and which, with every succeeding year, assume a deeper interest; but we have also hastily examined these works,—which are neither ancient nor modern, nor beautiful nor respectable,—the works of the low, the dark, the middle ages, which comprehend all that long and barbarous period from the days of Constantine* to Leo X.—from the 5th to the 16th century.

It almost seems as if Italy, indignant of any other monuments than those of her days of greatness, had thrown from her bosom every vestige of the barbarians by whom she was enslaved.

It is very surprising, but not very mortifying, to see so few of these works remaining; though upheld by the arm of power, and consecrated by the spells of superstition, they fast crumble into dust; and, though enriched with the splendid trophies of ancient taste and magnificence, their remains are viewed with impatience, or passed over with contempt: while the proud ruins of Roman times, defaced, destroyed, and trampled upon as they have been, still stand like the giants of a former world, looking down with contempt on these dispro-

* After the time of Constantine, there is not a single monument extant, that is not characterized by decided bad taste.

portioned and deformed structures of degenerate times.

It is wonderful that in countries where such noble works stood before their eyes, people should have continued, during eleven long centuries, to erect such mean contemptible masses of deformity as we now behold. In our own, though without any ancient models, parallel buildings are characterized by a grandeur of design, a sublimity of effect, a richness and delicacy of execution, a perfection of parts, a harmony of whole, that in these improved times we vainly and servilely labour to equal. Our own barbarous ancestors are our *unequallable* masters.

Those theorists who maintain that our Gothic architecture sprung from Italy, will look here in vain for the root. There is nothing worthy of that name throughout the whole country, excepting Milan Cathedral, and even in that, the doors and windows, the most beautiful parts of Gothic architecture, are any thing but Gothic, and are totally discordant with the rest of the building.

Indeed, excepting in a few cities of Germany and the north of France, (where, by the way, the finest churches were built by the English,) we look in vain out of Great Britain for every description of the true Gothic.

Not only has Rome no Gothic buildings, but it possesses, in my humble opinion, no building of the middle ages, or even modern times, where architecture merits praise.

I speak not of St Peter's, on whose merits and

defects I have already given you my sentiments; but setting that aside, among all the churches, and palaces, and costly buildings that have been erected, during the 1500 years that have elapsed, since the death of Constantine to the present time, I do not know one that we can admire or imitate, in the city, which profitted by the genius of Michael Angelo in its meridian splendour, and which still boasts the best of masters in the ruins of Ancient Rome.

LETTER L.

STREETS AND CHURCHES—ARCHITECTURE—SCULPTURE—THE CHRIST, AND MOSES OF MICHAEL ANGELO—BERNINI'S SANTA THERESA AND SANTA BIBIANA—SANTA CECILIA.

THE streets of Rome are narrow, gloomy, and indescribably dirty. Indeed, of all its antiquities, I imagine the dirt to be the most indisputable, for I am inclined to think that it never was cleaned since it was a city. There are no *trottoirs* for foot passengers, so that they have the pleasure of walking through the mire, as at Paris, with the agreeable anticipation of being run over every minute. But at Rome no people of condition walk; a noble Italian would not be seen upon his, or her legs, for the world; and as for the Canaille "gli Popoli," it signifies not what becomes of them any where except in England. I remember a Neapolitan Marchese assuring me, that if you drove over a child at Naples, you would have to pay a small sum of money,—if a man, a larger one,—but if an old woman, nothing at all.

In that land where old women are held so cheap, the carriages drive so fast, that the accident may

often happen; but in Rome, so great is the deliberation with which they move, that it is next to impossible, that, even an old woman should not have time enough to get out of the way.

The best street of Modern Rome is the Corso, so named from being used as the race-course. Part of it is the ancient Via Lata; the rest, which is beyond the site of the Flaminian gate of Ancient Rome, follows the line of the Via Triomphalis. It now extends a mile in length in a direct line from the Piazza del Popolo to the base of the Capitoline Hill; but, though lined with churches, and palaces, and handsome houses, its general effect is far from splendid; the reason of which may probably be its narrowness. You can scarcely raise your eyes to the lofty elevation of the buildings on either side, and though you certainly do not thereby lose much architectural beauty, yet it gives it an air of confinement, of meanness, and of gloominess, that nothing can get over.

The system of narrow streets, which is defended on the ground of being adapted to the climate, tends, on the contrary, in my opinion, to increase its evils. They are cold in winter, and hot in summer; for when the sun is low in the sky, the height of the houses is an effectual screen from his beams, but when it mounts into the zenith, his meridian blaze pours down into the streets, and the heated walls on either side give out their alternate caloric, even through the night, so that the close confined air has the feeling of an oven; and the

gasping inhabitants are half suffocated,—at least, I know, I was.

The large open piazzas, which had the free sun and air, I found far less oppressive in summer, and far warmer in winter, than those stifling lanes, into whose tortuous windings no cooling breeze can penetrate at the one season, and into whose depths no sun-beam can descend at the other.

I have often wondered that the inhabitants of hot climates do not adopt the Dutch custom, of planting rows of trees in their streets, which, in summer, would really afford both shade and coolness without excluding the air, and in winter, when leafless, could prove a very slight obstruction to the beams of the sun.

How beautiful, beneath the splendour of an Italian sky, would look wide handsome streets, planted with double rows of noble trees!

But the streets of Rome could never, I think, look handsome, disgraced as they are by erections in the vilest taste. That such large piles of building should have been raised any where, in such complete confraternity of ugliness, is marvellous; but that in Rome, with the specimens of ancient taste before their eyes, such monsters should have been produced, is more marvellous still. For while you behold the perfection of beauty in the ruins of Ancient Rome, you see the extreme of ugliness in the buildings of the modern city.

Nothing certainly disappointed me so much in Rome, as the bad style of the modern architecture,

more especially of the churches, which I had heard so highly extolled.

On the whole, I really think the outsides of the churches in London are quite as good. Putting St Peter's and St Paul's equally out of the question, I know no church at Rome, whose exterior elevation is so noble as St Martin's-in-the-Fields. There we see an approach to the simple majesty of the portico of the Pantheon, of which there is nothing to remind us in the city where it stands. St Paul's, Covent Garden, St Mary le Bone, and several others, are in better taste than any thing here; and I need not mention the admitted superiority of the interior of St Stephen's, Walbrook.

There is, even in the most crowded Protestant cities, an isolation given to the churches, by the burial-places around them, that is highly advantageous to their effect. But here, with the exception of the great Basilicæ, the common crowd of churches stand in the street without any open space allowed them, jostled and pressed upon by houses and buildings of all sorts.

Perhaps no city in the world abounds with such numbers of churches as Rome, or with fewer handsomer ones; I mean with respect to their architecture, not their decoration,—for in that no cost is spared.

Their exterior may be involved in one common censure, that of being hideous,—and their interior in one common praise, that of being splendid. The eye rests with delight on the pomp of coloured marbles that line the walls,—the superb columns

that support the naves,—the beauty of the paintings that adorn the altars,—the profusion of precious stones that enlay the shrines,—the accumulated magnificence that embellishes the chapels,—and the rich mosaic pavements that cover the floors.

These remarks apply to almost all the churches of Rome. There are few that are not decorated with splendour, and perhaps fewer still that are decorated with taste.

The Church of the Jesuits, which, like every other I have seen belonging to that brotherhood, is distinguished above the rest, in its overload of ornament, and deficiency of taste, boasts a chapel, whose columns, capitals, sculpture, shrine, and altar, are entirely composed of lapis lazuli, oriental jaspers, transparent alabaster, gold, silver, bronze, and crystal. Princely wealth has been heaped upon it,—and Parian marble has been cut into ugly groupes of statuary to adorn it.

There is, however, a pretty little church belonging to the Jesuits at Rome, called St Andréa al Noviziato, on the Quirinal Hill. It is built by Bernini; and it is worth a visit, from the beauty of its form, and of the marbles that line its oval interior. So also is San Antonio di Portoghesi, and La Maddalena, where there is the finest organ I have heard in Rome. On Sunday, or any other festa, about half-past ten, or eleven o'clock, it plays beautifully.

Nothing can be more tiresome than visiting a vast many fine churches, except, it may be, descri-

bing them; or what is worse still, hearing them described; therefore, I shall only mention to you those which contain something in sculpture, painting, or antiquity, worthy of notice.

The Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, built on the site of Pompey's great Temple to Minerva—now belongs to the Dominicans, instead of the Goddess of Wisdom; and the Superior of the convent is the grand Inquisitor. For, thanks to the enlightened policy of Pius VII. and his minister, the Cardinal Gonsalvo, we have lived in the 19th century, to see that upright fraternity,—the Jesuits restored,—and that righteous court, the Inquisition, re-established.

The Pope I respect as a worthy and a venerable old man, a zealous, devout, and sincere, but bigotted Catholic,—a good priest, but a bad prince.

The talents of Cardinal Gonsalvo I have known and admired; but, as a tree must be judged by its fruit, and a prime minister by his actions, there is nothing in these to call forth our admiration.

That the Inquisition is established, not only at Rome and Madrid, but at Naples and Turin, is, however, a lamentable fact; and the Inquisitors hold their sittings there every Wednesday. They have also the palace and the prisons of the Holy Office beside the Vatican, in which are chambers full of its black records, and still there are

> "Ample space and room enough,
> The characters of Hell to trace."

The times are indeed over, in which hundreds

of poor capuchins were burnt for wearing a little coat,* and thousands of unfortunate laymen for doing nothing at all. But will it be believed, that, in the nineteenth century, nay, even now, a grave solemn trial, for the crime of witchcraft, is actually pending!—It is even so.

But to have done with the Inquisition, and return to the Fine Arts. In the Church of the Minerva, is the celebrated Christ of Michael Angelo. It is a very fine statue certainly; but even while I said so, and thought so, I caught myself inwardly asking, "And is this all that sculpture can do towards representing the Saviour of the world?" Disappointment was, perhaps, a stronger feeling than admiration—for my expectations had been highly raised. But though it did not come up to what I had expected from the genius of the great sculptor, it surpassed any of his works I had hitherto seen, and though it may not express all that the soul can conceive of the devoted holiness of the suffering Redeemer, it more nearly approaches to

* Great were the disputes that were waged in the beginning of the 14th century, in the Romish church, about the superior orthodoxy of great or little coats, or frocks, for the capuchins, which ended in all those who persisted in wearing the little one, being declared to be heretics, and burnt accordingly. We have the names of upwards of a hundred who were burnt by the Inquisition for this cause, and are told by a grave historian, that the list might be increased to thousands! Allowing for exaggeration, what a tale is this!—Vide Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History, Part II. Chap.* 2.

the image of divinity in a mortal form, and bending under more than mortal sorrows, than any other attempt of man. The foot would long since have been kissed away by the fervent salutations of the pious, had it not been cased in brass.

The convent contains a library, said to be large and valuable, which is open to all men at stated hours.

The Church of St Pietro in Vincoli, upon the Esquiline Hill, is built upon the ruins of the Baths of Titus. Orthodox people used to pretend that St Peter himself built a Christian church here in his life-time; but this is not insisted upon at present. It is only affirmed, that the present church contains the chains that Herod caused St Peter to be loaded with at Jerusalem, and that when these chains came to Rome, and were presented to the other chains with which the apostle was manacled in the Mamertine prisons, both chains leaped together in an affectionate embrace, and have ever since been inseparably united. We visited this church to see the famous Moses of Michael Angelo.

This singular statue, which is unlike any thing that the imagination of man has formed before or since, cannot be beheld with unmixed admiration. It is impressed with all the daring conception, the force and the grandeur of design—with all the excellence and all the faults of that bold and original genius. The terrific Prophet is frowning in wrath on his backsliding people. He threatens them with the terrors of the law—and before him they must tremble. But is it the sacred fire of a

prophet, or the colossal strength of a giant that they fear? Is it physical force or divine inspiration? If he were to rise, the earth must quake beneath his tread. He is a being possessed of more than human strength, and seemingly endowed with more than human powers. But are they of good or of evil?

"And brings he airs from heaven, or blasts from hell?"

Should we not fly from him, least he should injure, rather than draw near, that he might protect us?

In a word, the brawny strength of the limbs, the force and tension of the muscles, the unwieldy bulk of the person, the enormous length and ropy thickness of the beard, the horns, instead of rays, that spring from the head, and the menacing aspect of the countenance give him the air of an incensed giant, rather than a divine lawgiver and prophet Polyphemus on the rock, it would more properly personify, than Moses in the wilderness.

Yet it is sublime—it is wonderful. The astonishment you first feel, soon yields to admiration. It is a statue you can never forget; it impresses itself on your imagination; it comes before you in your mind's eye; and it is unquestionably the finest of the works of Michael Angelo.

In judging of it, too, we ought to remember that it is a colossal statue, intended for a colossal monument to Julius II., and the only one of forty which were to have adorned it, that was ever finished; and that viewed in the situation, and at the

elevation which it was originally intended to have occupied, its effect would have been quite different.

The project of this mighty tomb was unhappily abandoned—(unhappily—for the loss of forty statues, by Michael Angelo, must ever be regretted,) the colossal bronze Statue of Julius II., which he cast at Bologna, was demolished by the fury of the populace almost as soon as made; and his grand cartoon of the Battle of Pisa, that greatest masterpiece of painting, and school of painters, unhappily perished, or, if report say true, was wantonly destroyed by the envy and malignity of Baccio Bandinelli.*

Thus the works of Michael Angelo, both in painting and sculpture, have been particularly unfortunate. Still we have reason to wonder that we see so few of them. After visiting every town and village in Italy, I have only seen several unfinished, and two or three finished statues of his, at Florence; an alto rilievo at Genoa; a little angel at Bologna; and two statues, a bust, and a small basso rilievo, at Rome!

This is, I think, all of his sculpture that Italy contains, and out of Italy there is nothing.

His authentic paintings, except the frescos of the Sistine Chapel, are excessively rare. Yet he lived

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* Vide Lanzi—Storia Pittorica. The rival cartoon of the Battle of Pisa, by Leonardo da Vinci, was destroyed at the same time; a work, comparatively extremely inferior, though of great excellence. These cartoons formed the grand epoch of painting; the transition from the Gothic.

to extreme old age; his active and vigorous mind was quick to conceive and bold to execute; and where then are the fruits of eighty years of labour?

In this church there is a fine painting of St Margaret and the Monster, by Guercino. Domenichino's picture of the Angel liberating St Peter, one of the monks told us, is a copy from the original, which hangs in the Sacristy; but the originality of that seems something dubious, or rather, it has suffered much, for whosoever painted, Domenichino certainly designed it. None but he could have conceived the angel.

The only specimens in the world of Raphael's skill in statuary, are to be seen in the Cappella Ghigi, in the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo. The figures of Elias, and of Jonah with the whale, are executed from Raphael's models, principally by another artist.

It is interesting to see the solitary attempt of genius, in an untried, but a kindred pursuit. These statues are certainly well designed, and their merits are sufficient, to shew that Raphael might have been a great sculptor, if he had not chosen to be the first of painters. The chapel is his architecture, and the altar piece was painted from his design, but it is utterly destroyed. The other two statues in the chapel are by Bernini.

But in the superb Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria, upon the Quirinal Hill, is the groupe upon which Bernini was content to stake his fame. It represents Santa Theresa in an ecstacy of divine

love, while the descending Angel of Death is about to pierce her bosom with its dart. Now, as Bernini's statues are almost always in an ecstacy, whether there is any occasion for it or not, this suited him exactly; and his aberrations from Nature are less striking where the subject is out of Nature. But every thing he did is marked, in some degree, by his extravagant mannerism and affectation. His talents were of no common cast, but their power was destroyed by his perverted taste. O for a Shakespeare, to warn him and his crowd of imitators, "not to o'erstep the modesty of Nature!"

His statue of Santa Bibiana, in the church of that saint, is far more free from these faults than any other of his works; and, in my opinion, so superior to them all, that had I only seen it, I should have placed him in the first rank of modern sculptors.

It was one of his earliest works, and it is said that when Bernini, in advanced life, returned from France, he uttered, on seeing it, an involuntary expression of admiration. "But," added he, "had I always worked in this style, I should have been a beggar!" This would lead us to conclude, that his own taste led him to prefer simplicity and truth, but that he was obliged to conform to the corrupted predilection of the age. I cannot, however, conceive, that it is possible, in the fine arts, "to see the best, and yet the worst pursue."

The remains of Saint Bibiana, and of her mother and sisters, who, it seems, were all saints, re-

pose beneath the altar of this church, in a beautiful ancient sarcophagus of Oriental alabaster. We were assured, that no less than five thousand five hundred and fifty-five male martyrs were buried here—not to mention their wives, who, it seems, go for nothing.

In the Church of the Santissimi Apostoli, there is a monument to Pope (Ganganelli) Clement XIV., sculptured in bas relief by Canova—one of the earliest, but not one of the best of his works. Opposite to it there is, on an ancient bas relief, a civic crown and a Roman eagle, emblematical of civil and military virtues.

In Santa Maria di Loretto, the statue of Santa Susanna, by du Quesnoy *detto il Fiammingo*, is considered by some connoisseurs the finest piece of modern sculpture in Rome.

In the Church of Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, built on the spot of her martyrdom, there is a statue representing her lifeless form, shrouded in its grave clothes, exactly in the position in which it is said to have been found many ages after her death. It is a beautiful and touching image of death; and the whiteness of the marble well represents its cold and pallid form. It is the work of Stefano Moderno, an artist little known to fame.

But its interest may possibly be derived as much from the subject as the execution. St Cecilia, the divine inventor of the organ, is, perhaps, the only saint whom Protestants, as well as Catholics, are ready to adore. Her name, consecrated in the divine strains of Poesy, is indissolubly connected with all

the feelings that wake to the spell of music, and almost with our very dreams of heaven.

The nuns were singing the evening service. We saw their figures, like shadows, through the gilded grate above us, but their voices did not seem to be attuned by their patron saint.

LETTER LI.

CHURCHES — PAINTINGS — FRESCOS — RAPHAEL'S SYBILS AND ISAIAH — AUGUSTINES — BENEDICTINES — FRESCOS OF DOMENICHINO AND GUIDO — ANGEL'S SUPPER WITH ST GREGORY — A MEETING WITH THE POPE — GUIDO'S ARCHANGEL — THE CAPUCHINS — TRINITA DE MONTI — RUINED FRESCOS — TOMB AND HABITATION OF CLAUDE LORRAINE.

In my last, I believe, I enumerated the few churches in Rome that possess any sculpture worth notice. Those that are adorned with fine paintings—or paintings that were once fine—are far more numerous; but these have generally suffered so much from time, neglect, dirt, damp, and smoky tapers, that their beauties, their colouring, and even, in many cases, their very design, are no longer discernible; so that you may go far to look at altar-pieces, which boast the names of the greatest masters, and, after all, see nothing. The obscurity of the lateral chapels, of the gloomy old churches in which they are hidden, no doubt, is one cause of this; and many of them might yet be restored, if

brought out to light and properly cleaned. If the Pope were to do this, and substitute copies in their place, I cannot conceive that he would be thought to have committed any great crime, even by the most orthodox of his subjects. At all events, the French, who were restrained by no scruples with regard to violating church property, or committing sacrilege; and of whose love for the arts we hear so much and see so little proof; might surely have taken them out of the churches, and arranged them in a gallery at Rome.

But, unless it was to adorn Paris, they took no thought for the preservation of the fragile works of genius. They have been the robbers, but I cannot discover how they were ever the protectors of the arts. They plundered Italy of its most valuable portable paintings, but they left all the untransportable ones to perish. I allude to the frescos, which, to the disgrace of the past and present government, are mouldering away on the mildewed walls of old churches, without a single precaution being used to check the rapid progress of their decay.

Neglect and ill usage are fast obliterating the touches of departed genius, and those beautiful creations will soon pass away, whose perfection can never be equalled, and whose loss can never be repaired.

At the Church of Santa Maria della Pace, above the arches of the nave, are the four Sybils of Raphael. They have suffered much from time, and more, it is said, from restoration; yet the forms of

Raphael, in all their loveliness, all their sweetness, are still before us; they breathe all the soul, the sentiment, the chaste expression, and purity of design, that characterize the works of that immortal genius. The dictating Angels hover over the head of the gifted Maids, one of whom writes with rapid pen, the irreversible decrees of Fate. The countenances and musing attitudes of her sister Sybils express those feelings of habitual thoughtfulness and pensive sadness, natural to those who are cursed with the knowledge of futurity, and all its coming evils—of crimes which they cannot prevent, and calamities they cannot avert. Raphael's fresco of Isaiah, in the Church of St Augustine, is indeed inimitable. The fire and fervour of the prophet beam from that inspired and holy countenance. Even in force and sublimity, it will bear a comparison with the Prophets and Sybils which Michael Angelo has left in the Sistine Chapel; and which, in my humble opinion, are by far the best of his works,—at least, of the few that now exist. It is in fresco that the chief strength and glory of both these great masters lie; and those who have only seen Raphael's oil paintings, (even the Transfiguration itself,) can form but a very inadequate idea of his transcendent powers.

In the convent, adjoining the Church of St Augustine, there is an excellent library open to the public,—I mean, of course, the male part of it.

This convent, like every other, lost its rich possessions at the arrival of the French, and will never regain them. But the Augustine monks, to

whom it belongs, still possess some little property. They make a great deal more by begging, by saying masses, and by the contributions of penitents; besides which, the Pope allows to forty of them forty-five paoli a month (about thirteen guineas a year) each. There are above fifty monks in all, and the majority of them are young men. What can be expected from a government that plunders the industrious to pay a pack of idle sturdy beggars! I mention those particulars, not that there is any thing extraordinary in the Pope's pensioning these monks more than others, but because I was led to enquire into the affairs of these Augustines by a circumstance which accidentally came to my knowledge the other day; which, scandalous as it is, I shall relate to you, because I think hypocrisy ought to be unmasked.

There lived, and lives, in a neighbouring street, called the Via della Scrofa, an honest cobler, whose wife is young, and, as one of these good fathers thought, handsome. To warn her against the snares and wickedness of the world, he took pleasure in giving her his ghostly counsel; and she became, in consequence, so sensible of her sins, as to come frequently to him for confession and absolution. One morning, last week, the cobler rose, as usual, at the peep of day, and went away to his work; but, in an evil hour, he happened to return some time afterwards, and found the Augustine in the place he had quitted, by the side of his wife. The neighbourhood was alarmed with the horrible screams that issued from the habitation; but the

cause was made evident when the holy father appeared, pursued by the cobler, who cudgelled him all the way to his convent.

A priest told me the friar would be sent to rusticate for a time; that is, banished into the country; which is the usual punishment in these cases —when they are discovered.

In the Church of San Luigi de' Francesi, there is a chapel (the second on the right on entering) painted in fresco by Domenichino, with representations of the holy deeds and sufferings of St Cecilia. They are works of first rate excellence, and, fortunately, though injured, are still very visible; but as an old Italian said to me, looking ruefully at the most beautiful of them, "Venti anni fà, fu bella bella assai, ma adesso si vànisce giòrnalmente."

If these are spoiling, the frescos, with which the rival pencils of Domenichino and Guido adorned the Chapel of St Andrew, are spoiled. They are at the Convent of St Gregory, on the Cœlian Hill, which we visited the other day. We stopped upon the steps to contemplate the dark masses of ruin heaped on the Palatine; the melancholy beauty of the cypress with which they were blended, the majestic arches of the Aqueduct crossing the Via Sacra, and the grandeur of the mighty Coliseum. The deserted site of Ancient Rome lay before us; the gigantic monuments of her fallen magnificence were spread around us; wild weeds waved over the palaces of her emperors, and the unbroken solitude that reigned through her

once busy scenes, stole over the fancy, with feelings of deeper interest than the picturesque combinations of the prospect alone could have awakened.

Whilst we were admiring it, the white robe of a Benedictine monk was swept over our faces by the wind, as he passed us. He apologised, and accompanied us into the outer court of the convent, where we found our lacquey pulling at the bell with all his might, and grievously complaining that he pulled in vain. The monk was courteously shocked to hear we had been waiting, would not hear of our going away without seeing the frescos; and promising to send the porter immediately, he let himself in, while the lacquey continued his exercise without; but though he made a peal, which seemed rather intended to summon the dead than the living, nobody came. The brotherhood seemed to be plunged into an everlasting sleep. We heard the good father storming about at intervals, above us, and making a most tremendous clamour, while occasionally he put out his head, which, to our inexpressible diversion, was, by this time, enveloped in a night-cap, and exhorted the servant to ring louder and louder still—his rubicond face turning at last quite purple with rage, as he continued to vociferate "Corpo di Bacco!—Cospetto! —Che Vergogna!" At last a lay brother came drousily forth, looking like Sloth, and the enraged monk, having severely reprimanded him, shut the window of his cell, and consigned himself to bed and to his siesta.

Our yawning conductor unlocked for us the

doors of three little dingy chapels, near the church; and on the damp walls of one of them, we saw the vestiges of the matchless frescos of Domenichino and Guido—the spectres of paintings, "the ghosts of what they were."

Their decaying colours and fleeting forms, which the absorbing moisture renders every day more indistinct, leave little room now to judge of their former perfection; but while the faintest outline remains, the indestructible beauty of their design and composition must be visible.

Domenichino's fresco represents the flagellation of St Andrew, which the Emperor at a distance is seated to witness. The suffering patience of the feeble saint is well contrasted with the brawny strength, and unrelenting cruelty of the executioner—(a figure, by the way, which is an admirable study for a painter)—while the varying passions expressed by the byestanders are beautifully told.

Guido has chosen the moment in which the aged saint, led to execution, falls on his knees to adore the cross. His fresco, being on the dampest and darkest side of the chapel, has suffered even more than the other; and from the deficiency of light, it is still more difficult to trace it; but by frequent and patient examination, in the brightest part of the day, much of the beauty of both may still be made out. But it would be the height of presumption now to attempt to decide the question of their respective merits, on which the first artists were divided in opinion, at the time they were originally painted. Annibal Caracci declared himself un-

able to decide the point, but he let an old woman decide it for him; for he saw her so violently affected by the flagellation, that he was ever afterwards convinced that Domenichino must be the finest.

That untutored nature is, after all, the most unerring judge of excellence, even in many of these arts that seem the last result of refinement and cultivation, I am far from intending to dispute; and in most cases, like Annibal Caracci or Moliere, I should be apt to take an old woman's opinion before a connoisseur's; but, in this instance, flagellation is so immediately addressed to the senses and nerves, that, perhaps, it was the nature of the subject, rather than the superiority of the work, that affected the old woman with such violent agitation. She would shrink with natural horror at the sight of the lashes that lacerated the bleeding shoulders of the saint of Domenichino; but could she enter so fully into the holy rapture of devotion—the sublime act of adoration—that burst from the saint of Guido, and sustained his soul in that last and dreadful moment of an impending death of torture and ignominy, that human nature shudders to contemplate?*

St Gregory used to feed twelve poor men every day here, and once, to his great surprise, he found there were thirteen; but the interloper proved to be an angel, who went away after eating his din-

* There are very fine copies of these admirable compositions in the Palazzo Tenari, at Bologna.

ner, for which purpose indeed he seemed to have come, for he spoke not, and did nothing but eat. Of the fact there can be no doubt, because we saw the very table at which he sat.—" Eccola !" exclaimed the man, triumphantly, striking it with his hand, when somebody laughing, asked if he believed the tale. A fresco of Guido's, which represented this dinner of the angel and the beggars, is all but totally obliterated. Not so his choir of angels, in another of the chapels, but unfortunately they are by no means the best of his works.

Among them there was one brown angel,—for angels, like women, " are best distinguished by black, brown, or fair ;" there was one angel—brown as an Ethiopian, but with eyes so bright and piercing, and shining with such liquid lustre, that they shot through the heaft of poor ——, and possessed such fascination for him, that he has actually returned three times to look at them.

There is a statue of St Gregory sitting in his pontifical robes, and very stately he looks. It is said to have been begun by Michael Angelo, who could never persuade himself to finish it; and I cannot wonder at it; for Popes, even when they happen to be saints, are but hopeless subjects for statuary.

I was, however, pleased to see the likeness of this extraordinary pontiff, who was favoured with the sight of an archangel, on the top of the Castle St Angelo,—with the company of an angel at dinner—with the attendance of the Holy Ghost, in the form

of a dove, at his ear, and with the love of the ladies. Certainly, a personage so blessed with the favours of angels and women, deserved to be sainted among men.

The old walls of his house lay scattered about, and are preserved with great care.

We had scarcely come away from seeing this Pope in marble, before we met another in reality. We were proceeding along the ancient Via Triumphalis, that leads from the Church of St Gregory to the Coliseum, when the coachman observing to us, "Viene il Papa," drew up close by the side of the road, and stopped. His Holiness was preceded by a detachment of the "Guarda Nobile," who, as soon as they came up with our open caleshe, commanded us, in no very gentle voice, to get out of the carriage. But —— ——, whose spirit did not at all relish this mandate, nor the tone in which it was uttered, manifested no intention to comply, and our servant, with true Italian readiness at a lie, declared we were *Forestieri*, who did not understand Italian. The officers resolved to make us understand something else, repeated the order, and began to flourish their swords about our ears. But —— —— sat with more inflexible resolution than ever, and all that was John Bull in his composition now refused to move. For my part, I make it a rule never to oppose these pointed arguments, and therefore jumped out of the carriage, and purposely contrived to get myself involved amongst the horses and drawn swords of the cavalry, knowing that I

was in no real danger, and that —— —— would forget his dignity, and come to my assistance, which he accordingly did; but otherwise nothing, I believe, but main force would have got him out of the carriage. We saw the papal procession advance up the Triumphal Way, along which the victorious cars of so many Roman heroes and conquerors had rolled in their day of triumph. His Holiness seemed, however, content with the honours of an ovation, for he was walking on foot, and instead of a myrtle crown, his brows were crowned with a large broad-brimmed scarlet velvet hat, bound with gold lace. This hat he very courteously took off as he passed us, and afterwards made another bow, in return for our courtesies. Our lacquey was on his knees in the dust, and all the Italians we saw, awaited his approach in the same attitude, then prostrated themselves before him to kiss his toe, or rather the gold cross, embroidered in the front of his scarlet shoes. His robes, which descended to his feet, were scarlet; on state occasions he wears no colour but white. He was attended by two cardinals, in their ordinary dress of black, edged with scarlet, followed by a train of servants, and by his coach, drawn by six black horses, the very model of the gilt, scarlet, wooden-looking equipages you may have seen in children's baby-houses. It looked exactly like a large toy.

The Pope himself is a very fine venerable old man, with a countenance expressive of benignity and pious resignation. His is the very head you would draw for a Pope. I have since frequently

met him walking in this manner, on the roads, for exercise, after his early dinner.

The old King and Queen of Spain, and that iniquitous wretch the Prince of Peace, may be seen every day, at the same hour, about *twenty*-two or three o'clock, or an hour before sun-set,* taking their accustomed drive, in two large coaches and six. There is a most amusing collection of ex-royalty, of all sorts and kinds,—remnants of old dynasties, and scions of heir legitimates and illegitimates, all jumbled together just now at Rome. Besides the old King and Queen of Spain, there are the Ex-Queen and the young King of Etruria —the abdicated King of Sardinia, turned Jesuit— Louis Buonaparte, the deposed King of Holland, living like a hermit—Lucien Buonaparte, the uncrowned, living like a prince—and Paulina Borghese, his sister, living like—like—but comparisons are odious, and sometimes they may prove scandalous. In this pious pilgrimage of churches, we must think only of the lives of nuns and saints.

Let us go to the Capuchins. Their Church, in the Piazza Barberini, possesses Guido's painting of the Archangel Michael trampling upon Satan. It is a daring attempt for a mortal hand to pourtray the forms of heaven, to make palpable to human

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* Time is always reckoned in the South of Italy from the setting of the sun, which is the *venti quattro one*,—twenty-four o'clock.—If you ordered your carriage at one o'clock, your coachman would bring it an hour after dark.

vision, those unreal, undefined images of exalted sublimity, and unearthly beauty, that float before the poet's fancy, and are dimly revealed even in the dreams of gifted genius. Perhaps it is impossible to satisfy the mind with any representation of the Angel of Light, which, in its loftiest aspirations, it essays not to picture; but Guido has made the nearest approach of any painter to realize the presence of a celestial spirit, and if the being he has pourtrayed were to appear before us, we should worship him unquestioned, as a delegate and a power of Heaven.

Radiant with divinity, and clad in celestial beauty, that light and ethereal form tramples into the bottomless abyss, and chains in torture, the gigantic and Herculean fiend, that howls and gnashes his teeth with impotent rage. There is no exertion, or effort of strength, on the part of the Angel —it is the act of volition alone; there is no struggle or attempt, as there is resistance on the side of the subjugated demon—for resistance is vain. We feel that the united powers of earth and hell could not cope for an instant with the might of that slender arm, which wields the omnipotent sword of Heaven.

It is said, that Guido, having a pique against the Pope,* "damned him to everlasting fame," by painting his portrait in the likeness of Satan, and

* Urban VIII.

so strong was the resemblance, that it was impossible not to recognize it.

Domenichino's Ecstacy of St Francis, which, in a fit of piety, he gratuitously painted for this church, is not, perhaps, one of the best specimens of his powerful pencil. It is a good painting, but a bad Domenichino. The only fresco of Giotto in Rome adorns this church. It represents St Peter walking on the waves; and, considering the infancy of art in which it was painted, and that it was a work of the end of the 13th century, it is, indeed, a most wonderful and masterly performance.

It is executed in mosaic at St Peter's; so also is Guido's Archangel; and Domenichino's St Francis is at this moment copying at the Mosaic manufactory. There is in this convent, a sort of museum of bones, the property of the deceased capuchins. With a party of ladies, who had a curiosity to see them, we went one day, in the hope of getting admittance, but the friars were inexorable, though we represented that it was not the live capuchins, but the dead ones, that we wanted to see, and that we could not possibly do them any harm; that they would never know any thing of the matter, and that the sight of their bones would be a very edifying spectacle to us, who were yet in the flesh. They laughed heartily, but to let us pass through the cloister of their convent to the cemetery, was not to be permitted.

The Church of the S. S. Trinità de' Monte, once boasted what Nicolas Poussin pronounced to be "the third picture in the world"—Daniel da

Volterra's Deposition from the Cross. It ranked, in his estimation, after the Transfiguration, and the Communion of St Jerome. But it was totally destroyed by the French, in their clumsy attempt to remove it, at the time they plundered Italy of her works of art; and this master-piece is now irreparably lost to the world. St Helena's discovery of the Cross, another celebrated work by the same artist, on which he spent seven years of labour, was also ruined, and the church now contains nothing worthy of a visit, except the tomb of Claude Lorraine. His house, built upon his own design, with a simple Doric portico, which he loved to introduce into his paintings, stands close beside it, and commands one of the most enchanting prospects that the eye ever beheld; although it is modern Rome only,—the multiplied domes of her churches, and the towers of her convents rising beneath the pine-covered heights of Monte Janiculum and Monte Mario, that meet the view. Ancient Rome is not visible—one proud obelisc, that rises before the church, alone tells of its ruined grandeur. But the scene has a charm so inexpressible—a beauty so peculiar to itself—that its study alone might well have formed the genius of a Claude; and those who have gazed upon its morning brightness, and its evening sunsets,—or watched the harmonious tints of golden splendour fade in the soft floating purple clouds that mantle the west,—must have beheld realized the pictures of Claude Lorraine.

The Church of Santa Maria Vallicella, re-erect-

ed by that renowned saint, Filippo Neri, and therefore called the Chiesa Nuova, is built after the designs, and adorned with the frescos of Pietro da Cortona. On the ceiling of the Sacristy, the Archangel bearing the symbols of our Saviour's Passion to Heaven, is one of the best of his works I have ever seen; the colouring is thought particularly good, and the effect of the cross, which, though painted on a horizontal ground, appears perfectly perpendicular, has been much admired. But even when called upon to approve and commend them, the paintings of Pietro da Cortona do not touch our hearts with admiration; they want the vivifying powers of true genius. Equally remote from its seducing errors and its redeeming beauties, they keep on in the dull beaten path of mediocrity. We see nothing to offend, and nothing to charm us; and even without faults they please less than more imperfect works.

This church was adorned with the altar-pieces of Rubens, Guercino, and Caravaggio, all of which are utterly ruined. In the Oratorio, into which the room where Saint Filippo died has been converted, we were shewn his portrait, by Guido. The fathers of the order of I Padri dell' Oratorio, instituted by himself, are now only twelve in number, and inhabit a convent large enough, I think, to contain some hundreds. It is built in the form of a square, inclosing an internal court, with open corridors, three stories high, and every part of it is airy, clean, and commodious,—which we ascertained; for as

the good monks were, as usual, fast asleep when we arrived, we took the liberty of walking all over it. Indeed, the lives of the whole race of monks and friars, black, white, brown, and grey, in every country where I have had the happiness of seeing them, may be aptly described by some lines of Prior's:—

> "They soundly sleep the night away,
> They just do nothing all the day;
> They eat, and drink, and sleep—What then?
> Why then—they eat and sleep again.
> If human things went ill or well—
> If changing empires rise or fell—
> The morning went—the evening came—
> And found *these friars* just the same."

The Church of San Andrea della Valle, is built upon the spot where the Curia of Pompey once stood, in which Cæsar fell. You may imagine the interest with which we visited it, although not a stone remains, nor an object appears to recal the memory of the deed that altered the destinies of the world. Yet did that memorable moment not the less strongly recur to us, when the blood of Cæsar was poured forth on the ground on which we trod—when Brutus, mistaking the excess of crime for virtue, stifled the soft pleadings of Nature, the natural beatings of his own heart, and plunged his treacherous dagger into the bosom of the friend to whom he owed his life.

Paintings of the martyrdom of saints, and monuments of the fanaticism of sinners, now met our view; yet was not that memorable scene which our

imagination recalled, much the same? Was not Brutus a fanatic, and Cæsar a martyr?

The one was a moral, or, if you will, a political fanatic—the other the martyr of ambition,—but it was the ambition "of heroes, not of gods."

But we came here not to moralize over the death of Cæsar, but to admire the frescos of Dominichino. He painted some of the many paintings near the altar, and the Four Evangelists on the angle of the dome. Among them, the beauty of St John caught my attention. The colouring is peculiarly fine—the conception grand—the design correct and perfect—the composition pure—and the expression true and forcible. They are works of real genius, and succeeding generations have done them the justice which their contemporaries denied.

Pietro da Cortona, and all his crowd of scholars and imitators, were envenomed in their animosity against Dominichino, and when these frescos were exposed to view, they raised so violent an outcry against them, that the prejudice was universal. Dominichino, who heard them abused on all sides, took it very patiently, and every morning, as he went past to his labours, he used to stop to look at these much reviled productions; and regularly, after attentively gazing at them, he shrugged his shoulders, and exclaimed—"Well, after all, they don't seem to me to be so very bad—*Non mi pare d'esser tanto cattivo.*"

His "Cardinal Virtues," in the Church of San Carlo a' Catinari, I did not admire, on the whole,

so much as these;* and his four frescos, in the Church of S. Silvestro on Monte Cavallo, I thought inferior to them all; whether they really were so, or that I was then as tired with churches and paintings, as you must be at this moment, I won't pretend to say.

In pity to you and myself, I will, for the present, conclude this pilgrimage of the churches; but do not flatter yourself that you are done with them. Good night.

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* Soon after I left Rome, I heard they were much injured by lightning.

LETTER LII.

CHURCH OF ARA CŒLI—STEPS ASCENDED ON THE KNEES BY JULIUS CÆSAR, AND THE MODERN ITALIANS—THEATRICAL PRÆSEPIO—GENERAL OF THE FRANCISCANS—MIRACULOUS BAMBINO—SACRED ISLAND—ESCULAPIUS AND ST BARTHOLOMEW—INDULGENCES—TRASTEVERE AND TRASTEVERINI—ASSASSINATION—GAMES—CONVENTS—TASSO'S TOMB—VIEW OF ROME FROM MOUNT JANICULUM — COMPARISON BETWEEN PAGAN TEMPLES AND CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

THE ugly old Church of Santa Maria in Ara Cœli, which crowns the highest summit of the Capitoline Hill, and is supposed to occupy the site of the splendid Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, is adorned in the inside with twenty-two ancient columns, and on the outside with a flight of one hundred and twenty-four steps of Grecian marble, said to have formed the ascent to the Temple of Romulus Quirinus. Up these Pagan steps I have frequently seen good Christians painfully

mounting on their knees,—a method of locomotion they seem to think more to the taste of the Virgin that lives at the top of them, than the vulgar mode of walking; and it is either practised, in order to repay her for some benefit already received, or to obtain some desired gratification. One woman told me she had gone up on her knees, because she had made a vow to do it, if the Madonna would cure her of a bad sore throat; in this case it might be termed a debt of honour. Another performed this exploit, in order to prevail upon the Madonna to give her a prize in the lottery, and really, in this instance, it could, I think, be considered no better than a bribe; but as the ticket came up a blank, it is plain the Virgin was not to be corrupted

Nineteen centuries ago, Julius Cæsar, at his first triumph, ascended on his knees * the steps of this very Temple, (that of Jupiter Capitolinus.) Strange! after the lapse of ages, to see, on the same spot, the same superstitions infecting opposite faiths, and enslaving equally the greatest and the weakest minds!

The last time I visited this church, it was crowded almost to suffocation, by peasants from remote mountain villages, arrayed in their grotesque and various holiday costumes, who had performed this festive pilgrimage in order to see the *Bambino*, the new born Jesus; and pay their respects to the Virgin, who, at this season, sits in state to receive company.

* Dion. b. xliii. c. 21.

This exhibition is called the *Præsepio*, and after Christmas it is to be seen in almost every church, and in most of the private houses of Rome; but it appears in its full glory in Ara Cœli, and there we went to see it.

The upper part of the church around the great altar was adorned with painted scenes, and converted into a stage, in the front of which sat the figure of the Virgin, made of wood, with her best blue satin gown and topaz necklace on, and her petticoats so stuck out; that unless she wore a hoop, which the friars, who were in the secret, positively denied; it was impossible to believe that her accouchement had yet taken place. There, however, lay, in proof of the contrary, the new born *Bambino*, the little Jesus, rolled in rich swaddling clothes, and decked with a gilt crown; beside him stood St Joseph and the two Maries; and, at a little distance, were seen two martial figures, whom, we were given to understand, were Roman centurions, made of pasteboard, and mounted on white horses. Near them, projected from a side scene, the head of a cow. And all these figures divine, human, and bestial, were as large as life. But off the stage, there was a figure even larger than life. He was the general of the Franciscan order, who resides in this convent. The rope that girded his waist could not, I think, have been less than a yard and a half in length. He might almost have represented Falstaff without stuffing; and certainly I never saw, even on the stage, a caricature of a fat friar, approaching the circumference of this portly father.

It is said there cannot be too much of a good thing, but certainly, I think, there was rather a superabundance of this good capuchin.

I have heard many of the Italians, even of the middling and lower classes, cut much the same jokes upon the friars, and laugh as much at their fondness for eating and drinking, and all sorts of sensual indulgences, as the English do. Yet, by a strange apparent contradiction, they are almost invariably the confessors, the preachers, the spiritual monitors and counsellors, selected by all ranks, in preference to the secular clergy.

There are *only* a hundred capuchins now in this convent, but, before the French turned them all out, there were nearly four hundred.

I forgot to tell you that the aforesaid *Bambino* which we had been to see, was originally brought down from heaven one night by an angel, and is endowed with most miraculous powers, and held in wonderful repute. I suppose no physician in Rome has such practice, or such fees. When people are in extremity of sickness it is sent for, and comes to visit them in a coach, attended by one of the friars. One of our Italian servants assured me it had cured her of a fever, when all the doctors had given her up; and I firmly believe it did; for, upon inquiry, I found, that the doctors, resigning her to the care of the *Bambino*, discontinued their visits and medicines. The *six* blisters they had put on were allowed to be taken off; she got neither wine nor broth, and drank nothing but pure water to relieve her thirst. After hearing this account, I was no

longer surprised at the *Bambino's* well earned reputation for curing diseases.

This church takes its name of "Ara Cœli" from the vulgar tradition of the Sybil's prophesy to Augustus, of the birth of the Redeemer, and his consequent consecration of an altar on this spot, "to the first born of God"—a monkish imposition, wholly unsupported by historical testimony.

Leaving the Capitol, we crossed the Ponte Quattro Capi, anciently the Fabrician Bridge, to the island of the Tiber, whose date, if history may be credited, is more modern than that of Rome itself, and whose creation is not the work of nature, but of chance, and of man.

It is related by Livy,* that at the expulsion of the Tarquins, a large field belonging to them, which was consecrated to Mars, and afterwards called the Campus Martius, was covered with ripe corn. It became the property of the Roman people, but, disdaining to eat the bread of their tyrant, they threw the sheaves into the river, which, as is usual at that time of year, was low; the corn stuck in the muddy bottom, and receiving continued aggregations of slime, soil, and other substances, deposited by the stream, it gradually formed a solid island, which was afterwards strengthened, and the margin formed round with walls.

When the ten ambassadors, sent from Rome during the plague, returned from their solemn

* Vide lib. ii. cap. 5. Also, vide Pliny, Hist. lib. ii. in principio.

embassy to the Temple of Esculapius in Epidaurus, the sacred serpent, which had voluntarily embarked itself with them, left the ship, swam to the island, and was never more seen by man.* That it was the god who had assumed this shape, and that he had chosen the island for his habitation could not be doubted. The pestilence ceased—the island was formed into the shape of a ship, in commemoration of the sacred vessel which brought him, and, near its extremity, the great Temple of Esculapius was built. A hospital was attached to it for the cure of the sick; but the Roman slaves were almost invariably exposed before the portico to be cured, if such was the will of the god, or if not, to perish. To check this inhuman practice, the Emperor Claudius ordained, that those who recovered should never more return to their former servitude.† Ever after the arrival of Esculapius the island was denominated the Sacred Island, and the Temple of Jupiter, of Faunus, and perhaps of other deities, were built upon it.

The site of the Temple of Esculapius is now occupied by the church of St Bartholomew; and in the garden of the convent, where the statue of the god, now at Naples, was found, there is still to be seen the sacred serpent, sculptured upon the prow of the vessel, into which the extremity of the island was formed. But, as the good fathers would by no

* Decade 2d, lib. ii. cap. 13, 14.

† Suetonius' Life of Claudius.

means incur the guilt of letting a female look at it, we were constrained to forego that criminal gratification, and patiently to await the return of the privileged sex of our party, who went to see it.

In this church they offer plenary indulgence; nostrums for the cure of the soul have supplied the nostrums for the cure of the body, that used to be administered here. Corporeal is changed into spiritual quackery, Pagan into Catholic superstition, and Esculapius into St Bartholomew.

I soon grew tired of looking at some bad frescos by Antonio Caracci; and, observing the inscription of "Indulgenzia Plenaria," I asked one of the young friars, why, since they had the power of giving "unlimited indulgence" to all, he would not grant us the restricted indulgence of walking through the garden? He crossed himself in admiration of my extravagance, and ejaculated "Jesu Maria!" I then pressed him to explain to me what plenary indulgence meant. He said it was "a mystery"—a thing incomprehensible to us"—a spiritual good"—"a blessing of the saints." But all these, and all that followed, were separate and reluctant responses to my varied interrogations.

Did plenary indulgence give permission to perpetrate murder? I inquired. "No! no!" "Could murder, when committed, be expiated by it?" That was again a mystery. Murder *could* be expiated. The "Santo Padre," (the Pope) who had received from the Prince of Apostles the keys of heaven, and the power to forgive sins, could pardon that, or any crime—but *how*, he might not say—all

that he would say to a heretic like me, after all my cross questioning, was, "that for hell, he believed, no indulgence was to be obtained, but from purgatory there was plenary indulgence accorded to the faithful, through the Madonna, St Peter, and the Pope."

Our theological controversy was here broken off, —much to your satisfaction I should suppose, as well as the friar's and mine,—by the return of our friends. We left the church, and crossing the Ponte San Bartolomeo, formerly called the Pons Cestius, from its founder,—though who he was nobody knows,— or cares,—entered Trastevere, that part of Rome that lies beyond the Tiber, and along the foot of Mount Janiculum.

In Trastevere there are no remains of antiquity, but abundance of monuments of superstition,— churches full of the shrines of saints, and convents full of imprisoned sinners—plenty of houses, but few inhabitants. These inhabitants, however, boast of being descended from the ancient Romans, and look on the upstart race on the other side of the river with sovereign contempt. They will not intermarry with them, nor associate with them.

They call themselves *Eminenti*, and support their claims to superiority by the ferocity of their manners. Bloody quarrels and vindictive passions, rage, jealousy, and revenge, seem to reign among them with untameable violence. They, among all the people of Rome, are the most addicted to carrying the prohibited knife, which, in the paroxysm of fury, they so often plunge into each other's breast.

I think we are quite mistaken in our estimate of the Italian character, in one respect. Murder is generally committed in the sudden impulse of ungovernable passion, not with the slow premeditation of deliberate revenge. That it is too common a termination of Italian quarrels, it would be vain to deny; and it is equally true, that however Englishmen may fall out, or however angry they may be; drunk or sober, they never think of stabbing, but are always content with beating each other. But in England murders are generally committed in cold blood, and for the sake of plunder. In Italy, they are more frequently perpetrated in the moment of exasperation, and for the gratification of the passions. An Italian will pilfer or steal, cheat or defraud you, in any way he can. He would rob you if he had courage; but he seldom murders for the sake of gain. In proof of this, almost all the murders in Italy are committed amongst the lower orders. One man murders another who is as much a beggar as himself. Whereas, our countrymen walk about the unlighted streets of Rome or Naples at all hours, in perfect safety. I never heard of one having been attacked—although the riches of *Milor' Inglese* are proverbial. Amongst the immense number of English who have lately travelled through Italy, though all have been cheated, a few only have been robbed; and of these, not one has either been murdered or hurt. I am far, however, from thinking that murders are more frequent in England than in Italy. In England they are held in far more abhorrence; they are punished, not only with the terrors of the law,

but the execrations of the people. Every murder resounds through the land—it is canvassed in every club, and told by every village fire-side; and inquests, and trials, and newspapers, proclaim the lengthened tale to the world. But in Italy, it is unpublished, unnamed, and unheeded. The murderer sometimes escapes wholly unpunished—sometimes he compounds for it, by paying money, if he has any—and sometimes he is condemned to the gallies—but he is rarely executed.

The Trasteverini are passionately fond of the game of Morra. It is played by two men, and merely consists in holding up, in rapid succession, any number of fingers they please, calling out at the same time the number their antagonist shews. Nothing, seemingly, can be more simple or less interesting. Yet, to see them play, so violent are their gestures, that you would imagine them possessed by some diabolical passion. The eagerness and rapidity with which they carry it on, render it very liable to mistake and altercation—then, phrenzy fires them, and too often furious disputes arise at this trivial play, that end in murder. Morra, seems to differ in no respect from the *Micare Digitis* of the ancient Romans.*

There is another pastime among them called La Ruzzica, or La Rotuola, which seems to me to bear a close resemblance to an ancient Roman sport,—that of throwing the discus.

* Cic. Divin. 11, 41. Off. cxi, 23.

The Trastevere game consists in coiling a long string round a piece of wood, of the shape of a Gloucester cheese, as tight as possible—then rapidly untwisting the string, when the wood flies off with immense velocity, and the length of its course is the criterion of victory. This diversion was prohibited—for it sometimes happened that legs of unwary passengers were broken, by coming in contact with these bowling machines; but it is still practised, though no longer in the streets or public roads.

The resemblance of the form of the ruzzica to that of the discus, and the attitude of the Trasteverini as they throw it, so strongly recalled to my mind the discobolus, that I could not help thinking it must have taken its origin from that sport.

They are the only people in Rome at all fond of dancing, and on the afternoons of Sundays, and other festa, especially during the Carnival and about Easter, most amusing exhibitions may be seen, of young handsome couples, in their picturesque holiday costume, dancing with an infinity of attitude and expression, in the courts and gardens of Trastevere.

Trastevere is said to have been the ancient quarter of the Jews, and its inhabitants now, as formerly, bear no very high character.*

The men struck me as a strong and vigorous race, yet Trastevere is said to be very unhealthy,

* Martial l. i. Ep. 116.

and it is certainly very depopulated. Its palaces are deserted, and its streets untrodden. The scourge of the malaria infests it in the summer; and it is apparently for this reason that they have established so many convents here, thinking, I suppose, it is no matter how many nuns die—and indeed, as far as the enjoyment of this world goes, it would, perhaps, have been better for many of them that they had never been born.

In Italy, a "monasterio" means a nunnery—and a "convento" a monkery or a friary, which is exactly the reverse of the application of these names in France and England. This part of Rome seems to have been considered insalubrious even in ancient times. Pliny,* in one of his invectives against Regulus, says, "he (Regulus) staid at his villa, on the other shore of the Tiber, in order to have the malicious gratification of making people visit it at that unwholesome season," an accusation which, by the way, is no proof of the philosopher's discernment, since Regulus must have done far more injury to his own health by a continued residence, than his friends could have received by their occasional visits—but it is a proof that the air here was even then reputed unhealthy at certain seasons.

Tacitus too somewhere abuses the Vatican, which is a part of Trastevere, for its bad air. As a proof of the discernment of the Popes, or the desire they have to send the sick poor to a better world, they have set down the great hospital of the Borgo San

* Vide Ep. ii. lib. iv.

Spirito, in the very worst air of this disreputable region.

The church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, is, like all the other old churches of Rome, adorned with ancient columns, all of which are of oriental granite; but their varying proportions and capitals, proclaim them to be the spoils of different Roman edifices. There are seven of the Ionic capitals of these columns mentioned by Winkelman, which, instead of the rose, have Lilliputian figures of the little God Harpocrates, with his finger on his mouth. On the left of the altar are two ancient mosaics, one of which represents a sea-port. The roof is adorned with a small Assumption in fresco, by Domenichino, which did not, I own, impress me with the admiration and delight which his works generally afford; but I do not mean on that account to undervalue what better judges than myself pronounced to be excellent.

If we may believe the priests, this was a public Christian church as early as the beginning of the third century. It might be so, for after the death of Septimius Severus, (A. D. 211) the Christians, during a period of nearly forty years, not only enjoyed toleration and obtained the privilege of openly having places of worship, but were even high in favour at the Imperial Court. It is even asserted,* that Alexander Severus, in the early part of his

* Vide Gibbon, (Decline and Fall, Vol. ii. p. 369,) who quotes Mosheim's Augustan History.

reign, imbibed the maxims of Christ, and entertained serious thoughts of erecting a temple to him as one of the gods.

In these times, it is related, a miraculous fountain of sacred oil sprung up in this church, and the spot is still marked with the inscription of Fons Olei.

As we had already visited the Convent of Saint Cecilia once, we did not return to it, but toiled on foot up a long and steep ascent to the Church of San Onofrio, where the remains of Tasso repose.

A paltry inscription on the wall alone marks the spot; for, neglected in death as well as life, his ungrateful country has denied a tomb to the poet, whose memory is at once her glory and her shame. She has not even

"To buried genius raised the tardy bust."

Italy was unworthy of having Tasso for a son. But his name is worshipped in every land,—his monument is erected in every heart; and though the laurel crown, which never encircled his living brows, is not suspended over his grave; no traveller, from the remotest regions of the earth, will leave "the Eternal City," without shedding a tear over the stone that covers the genius, and the sorrows of Torquato Tasso.

In this gloomy convent was passed the close of a life made wretched by oppression, by contumely, by poverty, and by chains;—maddened by sensibility, and cursed by genius. It was, by his last request, that his remains were buried here.—"Buried here!" I involuntarily exclaimed, as we gazed

on the dark flag-stone, trodden by every vulgar foot that records the tale—And is the genius that awakened those strains of divine poesy, which will never sound through the earth while it rolls in its orbit, really buried here?—Is the fancy, whose heaven-taught powers erected such glowing visions of beauty and of bliss, sunk in this narrow spot?—Is the heart, whose blighted feelings wept immortal tears through long years of neglected solitude, and burst its prison-bars, entombed beneath this lowly stone? —How can we believe, that the powers which embraced the universe, and seemed intended for eternal duration, are thus shrunk to nought; and that in this speck of earth is all that remains of Tasso!

From the tomb of Tasso, we *might* have turned to the frescos of Domenichino in the portico, which have for their subject the miracles of Saint Jerome; but one glance at their worn and washed-out appearance sufficed; and with some feeling of indignation against the land where the fanaticism and the miracles of saints are honoured and commemorated, while taste and genius are oppressed and forgotten —we gave one glance to the poet's grave, and left the convent of San Onofrio.*

We again climbed the steep sides of Monte Janiculum to San Pietro in Montorio, and from the

* I afterwards saw in a house adjoining the church, a Madonna by Leonardo Da Vinci, unquestionably original; to which, being unprovided at our first visit with a cardinal's pass of entrance to convents, we were, as females, refused admittance.

terrace in front of it, which seems to overhang Rome, we enjoyed the finest view of the Ancient and Modern City I had yet beheld.

Beneath us were spread its massive ruins, overshadowed with the dark pine and cypress—its deserted mounts, its fallen temples, its splendid Basilicas, its gorgeous palaces, and its cloistered convents; even the proud dome of Saint Peter's lay at our feet—the magnitude of the Vatican was shrunk to nothing; far over its glowing gardens and depth of Cypress shade, the eye wandered delighted, to the majesty of Mount Cave, the storied Alban Mount, hung with ancient woods;—to the purple hues that painted the Sabine Hills, on whose sheltered sides reposed Tivoli, Frescati, and Palestrina, as if inviting our approach; and to "gli Alpestri dossi d'Apennino," whose snowy summits terminated the view.

But I am forgetting, in the delight of retrospection, how insufferable is description, and how wholly inadequate to give the faintest idea of the beauty of any prospect.

I turned from this enchanting scene, slowly and reluctantly, to enter the ugly old church of San Pietro in Montorio, for which the finest picture in the world, the Transfiguration, was originally painted—but fortunately, both for its preservation and the just display of its unapproached perfection, it is no longer here.

The flagellation of Christ, designed with all the energy and correctness of Buonarotti, and painted

with all the vivid colouring of Sebastian del Piombo, still adorns one of these obscure chapels.

I believe Mr Angerstein's Resurrection of Lazarus, which was also designed and painted by the united powers of the same great masters of design and colouring, was taken from this church.

In the cloister of the convent, there is a small modern circular Doric Temple, erected by Bramante, at the command and expence of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, on the spot which tradition points out, as the scene of the martyrdom of the Prince of the Apostles.

Small and simple as this little building is, Bramante has contrived to make it a proof that the best of Italian architects (and he was the best) would have succeeded as ill in temples as they have done in churches.

If, however, there is a complete contrast in architectural beauty—it is curious to see in how many particulars, small and great, modern Catholic churches correspond to ancient Pagan temples. It is not only in the pictures and statues, in the plan and the decorations, in which we might be glad to trace even a closer resemblance—it is in the plurality of gods, in the worship of images, in the holy places, in the real presence, in the altars and votive offerings, in the holy water, in the multiplied ceremonies, in the pompous processions,—in all that we see, hear, and do,—that we might almost as well be in a Pagan as in a Christian temple. Even the glory that surrounds the heads of Saints formerly encircled the statues of gods. Images of Apollo and Diana, of Fortune

and of Pallas, had this *nimbus*, or halo of light, round their heads—and it seems afterwards to have become common.*

It is curious too that the door-ways of ancient temples, like those of all the Italian churches, were closed with a heavy curtain.† But we should never be done, if we were to go through the parallel between them in all its minutiæ.

And here I gladly finish this hasty and perhaps imperfect survey of the churches of Rome, with the fullest conviction that you will not complain of its brevity, however you may suffer under its tediousness—that what is dull in investigation, cannot possibly be amusing in description; and that it is unreasonable to expect you to listen with pleasure, to what I could not see with patience.

* Winkelman, Hist. de l'Art. Lib. vi. Chap. 2. § 37.

† Winkelman, sur l'Architecture, § 64.

LETTER LIII.

FOUNTAINS.

From St Pietro in Montorio, where we finished our weary visitation of churches, and, I believe, almost made a vow never to enter another as long as we lived, from motives of curiosity; we walked to the Fontana Paolina. Long before we came in sight of it, the rushing of its mighty waters stole gradually upon our ear; but the sound did not sufficiently prepare us for the sight, and we stood transfixed with astonishment to behold three noble cascades, falling in foam into an immense basin, whose surface was agitated like the waves of a lake by their concussion.

The beautiful solitude of its situation, surrounded by a deep evergreen shade, and yet commanding one of the most enchanting prospects over the whole of Rome, and the plain of the Campagna, bounded only by the romantic heights of the distant Apenines, is one of its greatest charms.

The Fontana Paolina, by a whimsical coincidence, combines the names of its architect and

maker, Fontana, and Paolo V. I never could forgive that good-for-nothing old Pope, for despoiling the Forum of Nerva of its precious remains, to ornament the tasteless fabric which the joint skill of himself and his builder has raised. Two dragons' heads, fixed on each side of them, and which, instead of fire, spout out insignificant streams of water, contribute to spoil the fine effect of these beautiful cascades, which have no parallel even in Rome. Nothing, indeed, strikes a stranger with more just admiration on his arrival in this capital of the world, than the immense numbers of fountains, which pour forth their unceasing flow of waters on every side. It is a luxury, the full value of which cannot be felt but in such a climate as this; and those only who have known that delicious moment, when the blaze of the summer day fades at last in the golden clouds of evening, can understand the voluptuous delight with which, in its hushed hour of stillness and repose, you listen to the music of their dashing murmur, and rest beside their freshness.

The beautiful fountains that play before the grand front of St Peter's, alone, of all those of Rome, satisfied my imagination, and delighted my taste. I know not how to describe to you their beauty; but visit them, in the repose of evening, when that moon which here shines like a brighter planet, walks in her glory through the heavens,—when the stars awake their mysterious fires, and the soft moon-beam falls upon the lines of the

Grecian columns—on the swelling grandeur of the majestic dome, the full height of the ancient obelisk, and the sweep of the circling colonnades, —when it brings every beauty into view, throws every defect into shade—when the freshness of the new-born breeze fans the cheek with its voluptuous breath, and the voice of the falling waters sooths the soul to rest;—visit them then; and you will feel their enchantment.

To describe, or to listen to the description of all the principal fountains of Rome, would, indeed, be a terrific task. They are, generally speaking, all deficient in that greatest of beauties, which, though it would seem the easiest to be found, is always the last attained—the beauty of simplicity; and which is to the fine arts, what action is to the orator,—the first, the second, and the third requisite.

The fountain of Trevi has been renowned through the world, and so highly extolled, that my expectations were raised to the highest stretch; and great was my disappointment when I was taken into a little dirty, confined, miserable piazza, nearly filled up with one large palace, beneath which spouted out a variety of tortuous streamlets, that are made to gurgle over artificial rocks, and to bathe the bodies of various sea-horses, tritons, and other marble monsters, which are sprawling about in it. After some cogitation, you discover they are trying to draw Neptune on, who, though stuck up in a niche of the palace-wall, as if meant to be

stationary, is standing at the same time with his feet on a sort of car, as if intended to be riding over the waters.

Now, all this seems to me to be in very bad taste. I have no objection to the monarch or the nymphs of the sea,—to tritons, or river gods, or any other description of these creatures, either in painting or sculpture, where all is equally fictitious, and consequently all in unison; but it strikes me as an outrage upon probability and taste, to have real water and artificial monsters, and to see sea-horses and men carved of stone, sitting immoveable in the pure living stream. Indeed, the copious quantity and pellucid clearness of the water, is the only beauty that I could see in the Fontana di Trevi. It would, I think, be difficult to dispose of so much water to less advantage, than the contrivers of this fountain have produced; and they have done their utmost, by the enormous palace they have built above it, and the colossal statues they have stuck upon it, to diminish as much as possible the effect of the immensity and the grandeur of such a body of water.

This water is the delicious Aqua Virgine, the same that flowed into Rome in the age of Augustus, and was brought by M. Agrippa for the use of his baths. Modern Rome is chiefly supplied with it, although the Fontana Felice, on the Quirinal Hill, is said by some to be of still finer quality.

That Fountain is so called, because Sixtus V., who built it, was called Fra Felix in the cloister;

an auspicious name, which augured well the fortunes of him who was raised from the station of a shepherd boy to a throne,* and not only to the rank of a prince, but to be a ruler of princes. It is also called Fontana di Termini, from its vicinity to the Thermæ of Diocletian.

It represents Moses striking the rock,—or rather Moses does not strike the rock, nor is there a rock to strike; but it is supposed he does; and he stands in one niche with a rod in his hand, and Aaron and Gideon, or some such superfluous persons, are stationed in others, amidst bas-reliefs.

What have four lions, either ancient or modern, to do with spouting out water? and what business have they here? Two of these lions, (formed of basalt,) are of Egyptian extraction, and are supposed to have been brought captives to Rome, when Augustus returned after the battle of Actium. The poor animals were taken from the portico of the Pantheon, to perform this unnatural employment. Ram's heads, lions, masks, all kinds of mouths, were used for this purpose by the ancients as well as the moderns. We seem to have kept all their absurdities in addition to our own.

The front of the Fontana di Termini is built of large masses of Travertine, adorned with [illegible] and columns of marble, and surmounted with [illegible]

* He was the son of a poor peasant in the March of Ancona, and tended his father's flocks.

scription; the whole is weighed down with a cumbrous attic, and is much admired.

In the Piazza Navona are three fountains; the centre one supports the obelisc brought from the Circus of Caracalla. It consists of a great mass of artificial rock, to which are chained four river gods —a truly *Bernini* idea! He has not placed them at rest, in the recumbent, meditative, classical posture of river gods, but fastened them in the most uneasy attitude, and unnatural contortions; and in order to shew proper contempt for the architecture of Borromini, who built the front of St Agnes's church, the two water deities on the side next it, are made to throw up their eyes to it in the shrinking attitude of terror, as if expecting it to fall upon them. But the Church of St Agnes stands where it did, and has no appearance of moving; so that the alarm of these huge creatures seems only ludicrous and cowardly. If they had held up their hands and eyes at its ugliness, I should have had some sympathy with them; but of its stability there is, unfortunately, no reason to doubt. From each of these colossal river gods, springs his own *dribbling* stream. You see at once the source of the Nile, which some stupid people imagined had never yet been traced—and the Danube spouts out his mighty waters,—in force sufficient to fill a moderate sized bucket—after a short course down the sides of the artificial rock, the four great rivers of the different quarters of the world are lost in the basin of the fountain, which represents the Ocean.

I forgot to mention that there is, besides, a ca-

vern in the rock, in which a lion and a horse reside in the most amicable manner possible; though what they do there in the middle of the sea, I do not exactly comprehend. This fountain is contrived so as to overflow annually; and during the burning heats of summer, for a few evenings in the month of August, it is the delight of the people of Rome to drive about among its waters, which fill the Piazza Navona. It was suggested by an ingenious friend of mine, that this custom was probably the remains of the sports of the Naumachia, exhibited at the annual games in honour of the gods, at this very period of the year, and in this very spot, which was the ancient Circus Agonalis.

There is a much admired fountain in the Piazza Barberini, upon a design of Bernini's, in which a stone Triton sits upon four dolphins, and throws up the water from a large shell. But the prettiest of these minor fountains, in my opinion, is that of the Tartaruche, in the Piazza Mattei, in which four bronze figures, in singularly graceful attitudes, support a vase, from which the water flows. It derives its name from four tortoises that adorn it.

On the whole, I admire, with fond admiration, the fountains of Rome; not that as fountains I think them beautiful; but that falling water and to ample quantity, must be beautiful in a climate like this, where its sound, even in winter, is so sweet to the senses. I love to repose my fancy upon the three noble cascades that are poured forth at the Fontana Paolina; the copious streams which burst from the rocks of the Fountain of Trevi, and those

silver fountains that throw high in air their glittering showers, within the grand colonnades of St Peter's. These are beautiful; but for all the ugly statues of monsters and men,—sea-horses and dragons,—prophets and lions,—and fishes and gods,—I hold them in utter abhorrence, as well as the clumsy and hideous buildings erected above them.

LETTER LIV.

VATICAN LIBRARY.

THE Vatican Library is called the largest in the world; not that it contains the most books, but the most space; for although it has been formed ever since the days of Hilary, Pope and Saint; and been augmented by the accumulation of several subsequent Popes and Saints; and has received the entire libraries of various kings and cardinals, (amongst others, that of Queen Christina of Sweden,) and part of the library of the Roman Emperor of Constantinople—yet, after all, I am assured, by what I believe to be good authority, that it scarcely possesses forty thousand volumes, although the amount is generally stated at double that number.

The collection of manuscripts is, however, extremely rare and valuable, and amounts to upwards of thirty thousand. Some of those are very curious. The famous Virgil of the fifth century, with

its costume paintings of the Trojans and Latins; the manuscript of Pliny, with its pictured Noah's ark of animals; the curious ancient Masks in the Terence; Henry VIII.'s Letters to Anne Boleyn, and his Treatise on the Seven Sacraments, which he presented to Leo X., and in return received the title of Defender of that Faith which he was so soon to overthrow; the Tasso and Dante, and an infinity of others—interesting as they are, have been already so often described, that I shall abstain from any observation upon them.

The only access to the Library is from the Museum. The great door, which is of bronze, and very magnificent, seems intended for ornament rather than use, for it is never opened. The usual entrance is by a small door, which opens into the office of the seven clerks or writers of the principal European languages, who are attached to the library. A cardinal is always the nominal librarian, and this room is hung with the portraits of these Cardinal Bibliotecarj, amongst which there is one by Domenichino.

Passing on through an anti-room, you enter a hall two hundred feet by fifty, entirely painted in fresco, with colours so glaring, and contrasts so violent, that it reminded me of an immense China bowl. This capacious apartment contains no visible sign of books, and indeed you may walk through the whole Vatican Library without seeing one; for they are shut up in wooden presses, which may conceal either great wealth or great poverty.

In this hall there is a column of most beautiful Oriental alabaster, spirally fluted, brought from the Baths of the Emperor Gordian, near the Trophies of Marius, and erected on a pedestal of Verde Antico. The capital is unfortunately lost.

Here, also, are two small Etruscan cinerary urns of *terra cotta*, with the common sepulchral bas relief of the fratricidal combat of Eteocles and Polynices.

We were shown the remnant of a piece of cloth of Asbestos, found in a sarcophagus on the Appian Way, which the man who exhibited, assured us was quite indestructible by fire; at the same time, that he very consistently lamented that it was reduced almost to nothing, by having been so often burnt. The fact is, that to a certain degree it resists the action of fire, and it was therefore used by the Romans to collect the ashes of the wealthy dead.

Having conceived this hall to be the whole library, great was my surprise to behold at its extremity, on either hand, a long gallery open upon me in almost interminable perspective.* I actually stood mute with astonishment—a rare effect on the female mind—and like the ass between two bundles of hay, I scarcely knew which gallery to take.

The one is terminated by the Sacred, the other by the Profane Cabinet, as they are pleased to call

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* We afterwards learnt that it is very nearly 1000 English feet in length.

them; the first being a collection of Christian, the the last of Pagan antiquities.

On our way to the former, we encountered the statues of St Hyppolitus, dug out of the catacombs, and of Aristides, with his name in Greek characters, to prove his identity; but he bore no relationship to the unapproached perfection of that admirable statue of Aristides we had so lately admired at Naples;* and we passed the philosopher without one tribute of respect or admiration.

The Sacred Cabinet consists of curiosities taken from the catacombs—laborious carvings of Madonnas in ivory—little pictures of saints on gilt grounds—bas reliefs of the barbarous ages, representing martyrdoms—instruments used in martyrising the early Christians, and a long *et cetera* of all sorts of heterogeneous articles. There are a number of red velvet jewel cases—empty; the French having carried off all the precious stones they could find, without any regard to their sanctity; so that the ear-rings and broaches of the saints and martyrs, in all probability, are now adorning the belles and elegantes of Paris.

The adjoining chamber of the Papyrus, is one of the most beautiful little things I ever beheld. Its architecture and decoration are by Raphael Mengs, who was employed by Clement XIV. to

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* Found in Herculaneum. One of the finest statues in the world.

form it, and to paint the roof in fresco. He has represented History writing on the wings of Time, and Fame hovering in the air, and sounding forth to the world the deeds she records. The composition is not, perhaps, very learned, but the figure of Time is fine, and the colouring, when compared with the horrible daubing of the present French and Italian schools, deserves the greatest praise.

Mengs, like many other artists, was too much cried up in his life-time, and cried down since his death.

The pavement of this superb little apartment, is of the richest marbles; the walls are encrusted with giallo and verde antico, with porphyry and pilasters of Oriental granite of the highest polish; and the whole decoration is as much distinguished by taste as magnificence.

The Papyrus manuscripts, which consist of ancient volumes unrolled, are enclosed in the walls in long columns under glass. They are of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, in Greek and in Latin; but in matter are of little interest. When closely examined, the papyrus has the appearance of waxed cloth.

The library, at this extremity, has been extended by the present Pope, who has added some rooms, in which the books can actually be seen and even got at. He has also formed a narrow little gallery, the walls of which are entirely composed of inscriptions in *terra cotta*, that otherwise might have been

entirely lost. I am sorry I can give you no account of them, my attention having been entirely engrossed by some Etruscan, or, more properly, Grecian vases, of singular beauty. An immense number of them are ranged on the top of the book-cases, the whole extent of the gallery; but these are by far the largest and finest, and, indeed, surpass any I have seen, except the unrivalled collection at Naples.

This library possesses a very fine cabinet of medals, which was carried off, and has been restored by the French; but it is still in such complete confusion, that it cannot be inspected.

There is, too, attached to the library, a whole chamber filled with a fine collection of prints, to which it is necessary to have a particular order for admittance, and there are in another chamber, the secret archives of the Vatican, to which there is no admittance at all.

We traversed the whole extent of this immense gallery to the Profane Cabinet, at the other extremity, which contains a most entertaining collection of antiques. Some of the bronzes, especially, are extremely curious and rare. Two bronze heads, from their singular beauty, first catch the eye; and also, but from an opposite cause, a bronze Etruscan figure, with the bulla, or amulet, about its neck, bearing an Etruscan inscription, a part of which has been decyphered, signifying that it was a Votive statue. It is very much in what we should call Chinese taste; the form and features, as well as the style,

bear a near approach to it. There are numbers of Penates; of those long-legged, spindly, little bronze figures, with enormous casques, exactly like cocked hats, on their heads, which abound in every Museum. Among these I saw the Egyptian Sethos, dressed in a tunic, and armed with a shield and a long sword, which, I think, precisely answers to the description of the Secutor.* I observed some types for stamping—so close an approach to type for printing, that I cannot but marvel how the ancients missed that invaluable invention.

There are several lead water-pipes, marked with the plumbers names; but I might write a little volume, were I to particularize one half of the curiosities I observed. I will, therefore, pass over the most complete collection of kitchen and household utensils I have ever seen, and many exquisite little pieces of art in gems, bronze, &c.

Perhaps the most singular thing in the whole, of its kind, is the long hair of a Roman lady, found in a tomb on the Appian Way, and in perfect preservation. It is strange how it alone should have escaped the common doom, and be, I may say, the sole physical remnant of hundreds of generations. Their bones, their ashes, their every vestige of

* The Secutores were one of the kinds of gladiators. They fought with the Retiarii, who endeavoured to entangle them by throwing their net over their head, while the Secutores pursued them to prevent their purpose, and slay them. —Vide Isidor. xviii. 55.

mortality, have all vanished; not even the paring of a nail, as far as I know, is left of all that lived and died in the long ages of Roman glory or degeneracy, except these tresses; which still remain brown and unchanged, as when their beauty first pleased the eye of her whom they adorned.

LETTER LV.

THE SISTINA CHAPEL—THE LAST JUDGMENT—MICHAEL ANGELO—THE PAOLINA CHAPEL—SALA BORGIA.

THE French, in permanently placing the most celebrated portable productions of art at Paris, would have committed an irreparable injury to sculpture and painting; for, by removing the apparent strongest temptations to artists to travel through Italy, they would have excluded the majority of them from the true schools of art, which are the frescos of ancient masters, and the innumerable and unremovable works of Grecian sculpture, (especially bassi relievi,) to the study of which, painting itself owes all that is great and beautiful in its design, conception, and execution.

There is no part of Italy that does not present a field of study. Bologna, Florence, Venice, Naples,* and even Genoa and Milan, abound in in-

* Naples for the sculptor, Bologna and Venice for the painter, and Florence for both, are inestimable schools. But

struction and delight. But Rome surpasses all. Here, at every step, the artist will drink in instruction, that years of study could not give him in our Gothic countries. If he has taste or genius, here it must develope itself, and find in every surrounding object, aliment for its growing powers.

The inexhaustible treasures of the Vatican, the Capitol, and the Villa Albani, with innumerable statues, bas reliefs, and fragments of exquisite sculpture, that meet the eye at every turn—the frescos of Michael Angelo, Raphael, Annibal Carrachi, Guido, Domenichino, and Guercino—all these, and far more, does Rome contain. Until you know these frescos, you cannot know what painting is. From these alone can you understand the true principles, powers, and perfection of the art. Experience only can make this be felt. Thousands who behold the Transfiguration never dream that they see the least part of Raphael. Hence, the student, satisfied with the collection of the Louvre, would rarely have explored Europe to visit the forgotten treasures of Italy.

The French only lopped a few branches of the tree of art—they could not remove its root and stem.

But, independent of the inconceivable mine of instruction contained in those models, which must be fixtures here; the artist will here find a finer

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let it be remembered, that though the sculptor may be excused the study of painting, the painter can never sufficiently study sculpture.

nature—Forms, whose contour and symmetry far surpass in perfection those of our ungenial climates; whose attitudes and expression, untaught grace, and classical beauty, I have often thought even approach the ideal; the sight and study of such forms as these, must give to his imagination new combinations of all that can constitute perfection.

To return to the frescos, the value of which cannot be justly estimated at the first glance. I imagine no one can now see the Last Judgment of Michael Angelo without a feeling of extreme disappointment. It is, indeed, somewhat difficult to see it at all. The architect of the Sistine Chapel has so ingeniously contrived to exclude the light, that, unless when the sun shines unclouded high in the meridian, the attempt is vain; and even then, blackened with the smoke of innumerable tapers, during three centuries, it may be supposed that many of its beauties are now obscured. Besides this, a huge, high, red, velvet canopy, lifts its awkward back from the altar into the very centre of the picture, breaking up the subject, and spoiling the effect of the whole.

We had interest enough with some of the red legged race to get this machine removed, for our especial benefit, during two or three days; but until a Pope of taste shall wear the tiara, there is no chance of its being carried off altogether.

The common engraving—bad as it is, for a good one is still a desideratum,—will give you a far clearer idea of this celebrated fresco than the most laboured description; therefore, I shall content

myself with observing, that it covers the whole of the wall of the upper end of the chapel, from the cieling to the floor. High in the centre, is Christ judging the world, in the very act of denouncing to the wicked beneath, on his left hand, that tremendous sentence—"Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." While glory ineffable surrounds his head, and saints and beatified spirits hover around him; the heavenly ministers of divine vengeance are hurling the condemned downwards to the bottomless abyss. Their last uplifted looks to that heaven which is shut against them forever, the ghastly fear depicted on their countenances, and their desperate struggles of resistance, are horrible beyond conception.

At this corner of the picture, at the bottom, is represented Charon, ferrying them in his boat over the dark waters of Styx, and driving the reluctant spirits out with his oar, exactly as Dante describes him—

"Batte col remo qualunque s'adagia."

The depths of hell open on its brink, and yelling demons, with diabolical gestures, and girt with hissing snakes and scorpions, such as even Dante's imagination could scarcely have conjured up, stretch forth their fiery arms to seize their trembling victims.

On the other hand, around the throne of glory, angels are sounding the golden trumpet, at which the dead arise. Their lifeless re-animating forms,

half lifted from the grave, are so finely designed, that, unnatural as is the subject, they seem to come to life before your eyes. Others, disencumbered of their mortal clay, are ascending into heaven, and angels, stooping from the clouds, are assisting them to rise into light and glory.

The grand and prominent figure of the Judge and Redeemer of the world, instantly strikes the eye, serves as the dividing point of the picture, and gives to the composition clearness, grandeur, and effect. Above his head, the fleeting forms of angels are seen bearing the symbols of his passion. St Bartholomew below, offers up his skin, the symbol of his martyrdom; and the figures of some other saints are done with a force and grandeur of design truly wonderful. But I have a particular objection to some of the female saints. St Catherine of Siena, in a green gown, and somebody else in a blue one, are supremely hideous. It seems that one of the Popes, (I forget which) in an unfortunate fit of prudery, was seized with a resolution of dressing all the naked figures in this great painting; and although he was luckily persuaded to spare some of them, I cannot help suspecting that he was the person who caused these poor women to be cloathed in these unbecoming petticoats; —but on this head I could get no satisfaction.

On the whole, I think the Last Judgment is now more valuable as a school of design, than as a fine painting, and that it will be more sought for the study of the artist, than the delight of the amateur. Beautiful it is not—but it is sublime—sublime in

conception, and astonishing in execution. Still, I believe, there are few, who do not feel that it is a labour rather than a pleasure to look at it. Its blackened surface—its dark and dingy sameness of colouring—the obscurity which hangs over it—the confusion and multitude of naked figures which compose it—(to say nothing of the grossness of such a display,) their unnatural position, suspended in the air, and the sameness of form, attitude, and colouring, confound and bewilder the senses. These were, perhaps, defects inseparable from the subject, although it was one admirably calculated to call forth the powers of Michael Angelo. He has, indeed, here shewn himself master of the grand and the terrible; and the learning, the science, the perfection of design, the vigour of genius, and the grandeur of thought, this sublime composition evinces, must be admired by all who are capable of estimating them.

To colouring it has confessedly no pretensions, and, I may venture to say, that I think it also deficient in expression—that in the conflicting passions, hopes, fears, remorse, and transport, that must agitate the breasts of so many thousands in that awful moment, there was room for powerful expression, which we see not there. But it is faded and defaced—the touches of immortal genius are lost forever—and from what it is, we can form but a faint idea of what it was. Its defects daily become more glaring—its beauties vanish; and could the spirit of its great author behold the mighty work upon which he spent the unremitting labour

of seven years, with what grief and mortification would he gaze upon it now!

It may be fanciful, but it seems to me that in this, and in every other of Michael Angelo's works, you may see that the ideas, beauties, and peculiar excellencies of statuary, were ever present to his mind; that they are the conceptions of a sculptor embodied in painting.

Michael Angelo, indeed, deserves our highest veneration for the just principles which he rescued from oblivion, for the emancipation from Gothic barbarism, and for the total and happy reformation he effected in art, by introducing the study of the antique, of ideal beauty, and of nature, in all their truth, simplicity, and grace. He was the reviver of true taste, and may be called the author of all the excellence we have since enjoyed—the master of successive generations; but, perhaps, at least as far as painting goes, he is rather to be admired for the excellence he has caused in others, than for his own.

In fact, he always painted unwillingly, and few of his works remain. The Sistine Chapel may be said to contain them all. The frescos of the roof were painted before the Last Judgment, and though less famed, are, in my poor opinion, far superior—more especially the noble figures of the Sybils and Prophets, round the frieze, which have a grandeur and sublimity that painting has rarely equalled. These are in far better preservation than the Last Judgment; so also are the nine *Miltonic* pictures, which adorn the roof—representing the figure

of the Eternal Father, calling the world out of chaos—the Creation of Man, and of Woman—their Bliss in Paradise—and, above all, the last beautiful picture of their Expulsion from these blessed seats. But it would be vain, by description, to attempt to give you any idea of the perfection of these great masterpieces of painting. I will therefore refrain, even from the expression of admiration, and the dear delight of criticism.

These, then, are all that remain of the *painter*—Michael Angelo—

> ——" quel ch'a par sculpe e colora
> Michel, più che mortal Angel divino."*

For we are told that he never painted more than one piece in oils,† although many of his designs were executed by Sebastian del Piombo, Marcello Venusti,‡ and others.

In the Paolina Chapel, indeed, there are—or rather were—some of his frescos; but they are so thoroughly blackened with the smoke of the thou-

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* Ariosto, Canto 33. † Vide Vasari.

‡ Marcello Venusti, of whose works I have seen little in England, was a native of Mantua, and, when a boy, only a colour-grinder to Perrin del Vaga, (Raphael's scholar,) but his genius forced its way, in spite of all his master's efforts to depress it. He found a protector in Michael Angelo, and, by copying his designs, and receiving his instructions, caught so much of his spirit, as well as that of Raphael's, whose works he incessantly studied, that he is thought, by many critics, to have united much of the peculiar excellencies of both masters.

sand tapers that burn before the Sepulchre of our Saviour in Passion Week, that they are all but totally obliterated.

Besides, the dungeon darkness that reigns in this chapel, even on the brightest summer's day, renders it absolutely impossible to see them. As well as I could guess at them, under such circumstances, they must have been grand compositions. The subjects are the Conversion of St Paul and the Crucifixion of St Peter—both admirably suited to his powers.

It is cruel to see works such as these, the sole remains of the father of painting, which might serve for the instruction and admiration of future generations, not only abandoned to neglect and decay, but mercilessly, and, one would think, sedulously destroyed. But it is no use to be angry.

The Sala Borgia, the anti-hall to the Sistina and Paolina Chapels, is painted with frescos, more remarkable for their subject than execution. They represent the Massacre of St Bartholomew, thus commemorated on papal walls, and by papal command, as a meritorious action! Times are changed. No Pope, I imagine, would venture now to give openly a sanction of approval to such a deed—nor, in fact, could any person, I should hope, be found capable of planning or of perpetrating it. These are the days of political rather than of religious fanaticism.

LETTER LVI.

THE CAMERE OF RAPHAEL.

I THINK there is a character in Raphael which Buonarotti wants—a truth of expression, a soul-touching beauty, a sentiment, a majesty, which none but Raphael ever so eminently possessed, but which Buonarotti strikes me as being peculiarly deficient in.—We turn from his works with our understanding satisfied and instructed, but our soul unmoved. They only address themselves to the head, but Raphael's touch the heart. The former will only be admired by the learned, the latter will be felt by all.

It ought not to be forgotten, in estimating the performances of these two great men, that Michael Angelo lived more than two life times of Raphael—What Raphael would have been, had he not been cut off in the very day-spring of his genius, we may with sorrow estimate, from the works which even at six-and-thirty he left to the world. He might be inferior to Buonarotti in learning—he might

owe to *his* more advanced studies much of his grandeur of style,—but he drew his perfection from himself. In the noble air of his heads, and the grand flow of his draperies, he is confessedly unrivalled—and in that touching beauty of expression—in that power which speaks from his works to the understanding and the heart—neither Buonarotti, nor any human being ever approached him.

It is years since I saw the Cartoons, and still they are present to me. Even while I write, the image of Paul preaching at Athens, and that sublime head of Saint John in the death of Ananias, return upon my remembrance. What sentiment! —What soul!—What holiness!—What beauty! —What must have been the mind of him who conceived it; and what an ineffaceable impression does it leave upon the heart!

To how few has been given that wondrous faculty of breathing into their works more than human beauty, sublimity and grace—the power of surpassing nature, without departing from her laws, and creating by the conceptions of their own exalted minds, forms of unimagined *thinking* beauty!

On Raphael, and on the unknown author of the Apollo, this precious gift was bestowed; and the admiration of successive generations, the fruitless imitations of artists of every age and country, have made us feel "we shall never look upon their like again!"

One can never sufficiently regret that Raphael was tied down so continually to the sameness and

senseless repetition of Madonnas and Holy Families. He knew indeed how to vary them—to give them that unparalleled grace, that tenderness of expression, and that soul-affecting beauty and divinity, which makes us gaze upon them for ever with unsatiated delight. Still, if there be any feebleness of design in his works, it is in such as these. But it is in his great historical compositions, in the sublimity of the Transfiguration, the matchless Cartoons, and, more than all, the immortal frescos of the Camere, that we feel in all their force his transcendant powers; and these imperishable memorials will for ever consecrate his name.

Imperishable, did I say! Alas! while we gaze upon the mouldering frescos of the Camere, how do we mourn over the decay of works such as the world can see no more!

All that brutal injury, culpable neglect, and still more culpable restoration, could do to accelerate their destruction, has been added to the slow attacks of time. Scarcely ten years after they were painted, when Rome was taken by assault,* the licentious soldiers lived in these chambers, lighted their fires, in default of chimnies, on the stone floors, blackening the paintings with smoke, (which is far more destructive to frescos than to oils,) and even wantonly injured and defaced many of the finest heads. These, Sebastian del Piombo was employed to restore; though a capital colourist, his powers

* A. D. 1528.

were by no means equal to the task, and he executed it so ill, that Titian, who afterwards visited these chambers with him, purposely asked him, if he knew who was the presumptuous and ignorant blockhead that had daubed over these noble heads?*

But the injuries that would have wholly ruined any other paintings have scarcely thrown a cloud over these; and while the faintest outline remains, they must retain their pre-eminent superiority. But that superiority, in their present state, is by no means striking at the first glance. After all your high-raised expectations, you will walk through a set of cold, square, gloomy, unfurnished rooms, with some old, obscure, faded figures painted on the walls; and these are the Camere of Raphael! You will enquire, *Ubi est Raphael?* Your disappointment will have no bounds. But have patience—suspend your judgment—learn to look on them—and every fresh examination will reward you with the perception of new beauties, and a higher sense of their excellence.†

Every inch of the walls, from the ceiling to the floor, and the whole of the roofs, are covered with

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* "Che fosse quel presuntuoso ed ignorante, che avea embrattati que' volti?"

Lanzi. Storia Pittorica.

† Such is the gloominess of these chambers, and the obscurity of the paintings, that they never ought to be visited except early on a bright clear day. Even before two o'clock, the light is lost for them.

paintings. They are not, however, all done by his own hand—many of them, either entirely or in part, were executed by his principal pupils, under his eye, and from his designs; and some of the frescos of the ceilings are Pietro Perugino's. Such a number and variety, it may be supposed, are marked by varying degrees of excellence; but Raphael's success seems to me to be always in exact proportion to the grandeur, the interest, and the difficulty of the subject.

By far the finest of these pieces, in my humble opinion, are the Burning of the Borgo San André, the Liberation of St Peter from Prison, and the School of Athens. In the first, which covers the whole side of a room, is represented the conflagration of a part of Rome, adjoining the Vatican, which happened in the pontificate of Leo IV.

The distraction of the mothers, and the poor little naked children clinging to them; the red raging of the flames on the one hand, the terrified groupes on the other—among which, the people, like true Italians, instead of taking measures to extinguish the fire, are falling on their knees to implore the mediation of the Pope, who appears, surrounded with priests, far in the distance, at a window in the palace, making the sign of the cross—by which the flames miraculously disappeared:—the woman, with the bucket of water—the men escaping naked over the wall—all are admirable.

The most striking groupe is a family escaping from the fire; under which, Raphael has introduced Æneas, bearing Anchises on his shoulders, and

leading Ascanius in his hand—while Creusa follows at a little distance—left—both in the poet and the painter's representation of that event, by "the pious Æneas," who took good care of himself, his father, and his son—to shift for herself.

The powerless hanging limbs, and the helpless feebleness of the old man, are beautifully represented.

Every subordinate part is as perfect as the whole of this great composition, without attracting attention unduly. The very pavement of the street is inimitable.

In another painting in the same room, the Coronation of Charlemagne, I was much struck with the beauty of the little page. There is a contrast too between the youth and smiling innocence of the boy, and the weight of cares and woes one attaches to the idea of the crown he bears, that perhaps adds to its effect. The head of one of the bishops too—but we should never be done were I to enumerate the hundredth part of the beauties that delight me in these frescos.

In the next room is the School of Athens. I cannot find words sufficient to speak my admiration of this wonderful performance, which is, perhaps, the finest picture in the world, and one of the greatest and most perfect productions of mind. The skill of the composition—the art with which fifty-two figures, all of equal importance, all philosophers, all in the same style of dress, are arranged in one piece, without monotony, crowding, or

confusion, the character preserved in each—the interest given to a cold scholastic discussion—no praise can do it justice, and without seeing it, you never can conceive its perfection.

On the steps of a Grecian portico, stand Aristotle and Plato, engaged in argument, and each holding a volume in his hand. Their disciples are ranged around, attentively listening to them. Beneath is Diogenes,—an inimitable figure,—listlessly extended on the steps. On the left, at the top, is Socrates, earnestly talking to young Alcibiades, who listens in a lingering sort of attitude, as if half subdued by the wisdom of the sage—half willing to turn away from it; acknowledging inwardly the truth of his doctrines—yet still resolved to give the reins to pleasure, and run the career of gay enjoyment. I know not, however, why the young Grecian was not made more handsome. The old man beside him, with a cap on, listening to Socrates, is inimitable. Another, looking over the shoulder of Pythagoras, who is writing his works, is, if possible, still finer. The figure, in deep distracted thought, leaning on his elbow, with a pen in his hand; Zoroaster holding a globe; Archimedes (which, it is said, is the portrait of Raphael's uncle, Bramante, the architect,) stooping to trace a geometrical figure, with compasses on a slate on the ground, and the whole group that surrounds him, are beyond all praise. In the corner on the right, the figure with a black cap, is the portrait of Raphael himself, and that beside him, of Pietro Perugino. Several

other figures are said to be likenesses of his contemporaries. But whatever were the features he copied, he has given them that character and expression, which exactly suited his subject, together with the very truth of nature itself.

With grief do I say, that this inestimable work has suffered still more than the rest, and I even fancy that since I first saw it, now nearly two years, some of the heads are more defaced.

Above the window, in this room, is painted Apollo, on Mount Parnassus, encircled by the Muses, and playing on the violin—I could have wished it had been the lyre, since we were to see, not to hear it. The whole groupe is beautiful, and the figure of Sappho, reclining below, peculiarly so. Homer, Virgil, Dante, and many others, appear in the sacred choir. I had repeatedly passed many hours in gazing at the walls in this room, before I thought of looking at the ceiling, on which, among other things, the figures of History, Poetry, and Philosophy, are painted by Raphael himself. The latter struck me, as particularly fine.

In the third room, the liberation of St Peter from prison, is one of the finest paintings genius ever produced; but such is its wretched situation, immediately above the great Gothic window which cuts into it, that its effect is, in a great degree, lost, both from the bad light and the uncouth awkwardness of its form.

This wall has been the bed of Procrustes, on which the productions of genius have been stretch-

ed out or compressed. As it is, this may perhaps be considered three paintings rather than one. In the centre, through the grated window of the dungeon, is seen St Peter in chains, and the angel appearing to him, and commanding him to rise. The transcendent glory that surrounds the head of the celestial visitor, forms the sole light of the piece. Again, on the right, at the prison doors, the angel appears leading forth the apostle. Their figures, in both repetitions, are wonderfully fine. On the left, (at the other side of the window,) are two soldiers, hastily descending the steps leading from the dungeon, in consternation and alarm, the moon shining bright on their glittering armour, and shielding their eyes from the sudden blinding glare of the torch their comrade holds at the foot of the stair, which falls full on the face of another soldier, awakening from sleep—admirably expressed. But vain is all description—vain would be all imitation. The very mechanism of this wonderful picture,—the variety of lights, the moonlight shining on the distant country, and on the soldier's arms,—the torch gleaming on their faces,—and the two celestial lights emanating from the presence of the angel,—are alone, in their management and effect, a prodigy of skill and science.

In the same chamber, is the expulsion of Heliodorus from the Temple by Angels. The history is related in Maccabees. When attempting to seize "the money laid up here for the fatherless and widows, an apparition appeared—a horse with a terrible rider, adorned with a very fair covering, and

he ran fiercely and smote at Heliodorus, and two young men, notable in strength, excellent in beauty, and comely in apparel, who scourged him continually." *

Nothing can exceed the rushing of the attack—the rapidity of the onset—the magic, that makes the action seem to go on before your eyes.

The superhuman force and activity of the vengeful messengers, strike you with awe; but there is no exaggeration, no violence, no overstraining. Pope Julius II. insisted upon being brought into this scene, though it happened at least eighteen hundred years before he was born. So Raphael was obliged to introduce him, and he appears at the corner, borne in on his chair of state. Raphael has certainly done this groupe, (which, of itself, is a master-piece of painting,) the honour of painting it with his own hand, though I doubt the executive part of the rest of the picture being his.

In the fourth and last chamber, is the great battle between Constantine and Maxentius, designed, and even commenced by Raphael, in oils, immediately before his progress was arrested forever by the hand of death. It was afterwards painted in fresco, by Giulio Romano, and the colouring has his faults—too much of that red hue, that opake brickiness, that general diffusion of lights, and want of chiar' oscuro, that we see in

* II. Maccabees, Chap. iii.

works; but it is given with all his characteristic spirit and energy.

In this grand composition, Raphael has successfully triumphed over all the confessed difficulties of the subject. It has all the action, and hurry, and movement of a battle, without the smallest confusion. At one glance you see the whole. The figure of Constantine, riding over the field on his milk-white charger, at once catches your eye. Victory sits on his crowned and lofty front, while the defeated usurper, sinking in the stream, grappling, in his last convulsive agonies, with instinctive desperation, the bridle of his spent and panting steed, forces you, shuddering, to gaze upon its horrors.

In this room, and painted also by Giulio Romano, is the apparition of the Fiery Cross in the Heavens, which was made to Constantine previous to the battle. Though excellent in itself, it is comparatively very inferior. The rest of the paintings in this chamber will attract no notice, excepting the two female figures, Justice and Prudence, painted in oils by Raphael, and the last that his hand ever executed.

I have passed over wholly without notice, many of the frescos, which I have spent hours, and I might add days, in studying and admiring, from the wish not to swell this letter with vain and tedious descriptions. It is not for me to attempt to praise the last and best works of this greatest of painters. Little as, perhaps, I am able to estimate all their merit and science, I have felt their perfection,

and drawn from their study, a delight, which words can never describe. It is impossible, indeed, to see works such as these, without feeling the mind enlarged, and being conscious of higher ideas of beauty, of perfection, of moral dignity and power. That I have seen them—that their image is indelibly engraved upon my mind—will be, through life, a source of unalienable pleasure to me; nor would I part with their very remembrance, for much that this world could bestow.

LETTER LVII.

THE LOGGIE OF RAPHAEL—THE PAINTINGS IN THE VATICAN.

I have but a few words to say on the Loggie of Raphael, for, besides that enough has already been said and written upon them—that they are decidedly inferior to the inimitable frescos of the Camere, painted at a much earlier period, and for the most part executed from his designs by his pupils—to enter into them at all, would require a minuteness of detail that would be perfectly intolerable.

The first story consists merely of ornamental paintings of treillage, shells, flowers, &c. which merit little notice. The second, comprises that series of pictures, from the creation of the world to the crucifixion of our Saviour, which has sometimes been called Raphael's Bible. These paintings are on a very small scale. Each arcade, or loggia, or space between two pillars, contains four, on the four sides of its coved roof.

The first of these, which represents God the Father, in the void of chaos, calling forth the world and the deep, is unquestionably the work of Raphael's own hand, and is prodigiously extolled by connoisseurs. Michael Angelo himself must have been struck with its sublimity, for he exclaimed, that Raphael could never have painted it had he not seen his own figure of the Eternal Father, on the roof of the Sistine chapel, from which, at his desire, Raphael had been jealously excluded. No one, however, but his rival, will charge Raphael with this petty pilfering. The work is his own, whatever be its merits or defects. For my own part, I confess, that I do not see in this, or in any of the paintings of the Loggie, that greatness of style, that elevation of thought, and wondrous beauty of expression, that characterise his later and better works; nay, more, that this figure of the Supreme Being, sprawling about, with his arms and legs extended on every opposite direction, so far from striking me with its sublimity, was so inexpressibly shocking to me, that I turned from it with disgust.

The quadruple image of the Almighty, fills the four compartments of this first Loggia. In one of these, painted by Giulio Romano, he is represented with the sun in one hand, and the moon in the other, kicking the earth to its place with his foot.

Not even Raphael's pencil can reconcile me to any representation of the Deity, and I will not say what I think of these.

The Baptism of Christ, which is, I believe, al-

most the only other picture of the Loggie executed by the hand of Raphael himself, I admired the most of any. But the examination of them is so peculiarly fatiguing, from their number, and from the position into which it throws the head, that I have not studied them with the attention they deserve. On the whole, however, good engravings will give you a far better idea of the Loggie than of most paintings, for their chief merit consists in their design and composition; the colouring, perhaps, originally faulty, is now much injured by time, and exposure to the atmosphere.

The gallery of oil paintings in the Vatican, contains the two finest pictures in the world—the Transfiguration, of Raphael, and the Communion of St Jerome, of Domenichino. It is the fashion now, I believe in consequence of Madame de Stael's commendation, to give the preference to the latter. The fact is, that Raphael is the first, and Domenichino the second, painter in the world—and these are their masterpieces. The Transfiguration has suffered more from time, injury, and restoration, and it is only to the eye that has the true feeling for the highest species of perfection, that its superiority will be manifest. The beauties of the Communion, which is in far finer preservation, are much more palpable—the action is one, simple and clear—and it is consequently as much admired at the first sight as the last. But the Transfiguration will be far more admired the hundredth time than the first. It is,

besides, infinitely more difficult. Many painters might have made a fine Communion of St Jerome, but who but Raphael could have painted the Transfiguration!

The glorified—the super-human figure of our Saviour transfigured in the clouds, is an attempt the most difficult, I had almost said presumptuous, that was ever made in painting—and, at the same time, perhaps the most successful. It is, indeed, the triumph of genius. I have never seen it without the vain wish that it could be divested of Moses and Elisha, on each side; but the truth of gospel history condemned Raphael to this. Look at the Transfiguration without these accompanying prophets, and you will better judge of its wonderful perfection.

It is somewhat strange to see the Transfiguration—including the three apostles, prostrate on the mount, shading their dazzled senses from the insufferable brightness—occupying only a small part of the top of the canvas—and the principal field filled with a totally distinct, and certainly far superior, picture. But this was done in compliance with the *orders* of the monks of St Pietro, in Montorio, for whose church it was painted. It was the universal custom of the age—the yet unbanished taste of Gothic days—to have two pictures, a celestial and a terrestrial one, wholly unconnected with each other; accordingly we see few, even of the finest paintings, in which there is not a heavenly subject above and an earthly one below—for the

great masters of that day, like our own Shakespeare, were compelled to suit their works to the taste of their employers.

Domenichino lived in an age which had shaken off many barbarisms—his angels are connected with the picture, and look down upon the dying saint; whose failing, trembling limbs are supported, kneeling, in life's last moments, to receive the cup of Christ—with looks of such holy love and rapture, that we could not wish them away. I do not think the Communion of St Jerome equal to the Transfiguration—it is a work of less science, less difficulty, and less power; but I do think it the second painting, in the world, and the Murder of Peter the Martyr, the third.*

Domenichino's Communion of St Jerome,† too, is, at least, equal to his frescos; but the Transfiguration is far inferior to those of Raphael.

The colouring of the Madonna del Foligno, in this collection, is the finest, perhaps because the least injured, of Raphael's works. It may vie with Titian.

Guido's Fortune, one of his beautiful poetical thoughts, is enchanting. You long to detain her, but it is vain. She eludes your grasp, and poor little Cupid, who is pursuing her through the ambient air, you see will be left in the lurch. A sentimentalist might say that Love seldom lays hold of

* The masterpiece of Titian, now at Venice.

† And, I might add, his Martyrdom of St Agnes at Bologna.

Fortune. But what shall we say to Love pursuing Fortune so eagerly? That it is in life, as in the picture? I have seen some duplicates, and many copies of this beautiful work, in various parts of the world, but this is by far the finest.

Andrea Sacchi's Dream of St Bruno, is his masterpiece.

This saint, the founder of the Carthusian Order, had, it seems, a dream, in which he saw a number of monks, in long white flannel gowns, go up the steeps of the Apenines; in consequence of which the Order was founded, and *Certosa* convents built all over Italy; and as painters in those days had no choice as to their subjects, and were obliged to paint what piety, rather than taste dictated—Andrea was ordered to paint this dream. There could not well be a more unpromising subject; and it is wonderful, that with all its disadvantages,—the want of action or interest, the uniform white figures, dressed in garments of the same hue and form, and ranged in a long row,—he could produce such a capital picture as this.

Guercino's Santa Petronilla, is a work of great power and science, and is considered one of the first masterpieces of this great artist. His Incredulity of St Thomas, is very fine, and has all the breadth, and force of effect, without exaggeration, for which his works are so conspicuous. His models are said to have been the heads of peasants; but, at least, there is nothing low or ignoble in them. In Caravaggio we see both.

We may turn to his Deposition from the Cross, fine as it is, in proof of it. He never painted any thing without vulgarity—nor any thing without forcing us to admire.

Titian's Martyrdom of St Sebastian, has been quite as much commended as it deserves. The colouring of the saint, indeed, is beyond all praise. It lives and breathes. But this very animation, disunites it from the rest. It seems a real figure among painted ones. It attracts the eye entirely to itself, and by no means pleases it; for it is vilely drawn—absolutely mis-shapen. His model has been bad, and he has copied it as closely in the form, as in the colouring. The expression of St Catherine is fine; but, on the whole, the composition is but poor.

Barocci's Annunciation, is esteemed his capo d'opera. In my humble opinion, he never produced any capo d'opera at all. I have never been able to admire sufficiently the peach blossom colouring of this most affected and manieré painter; but the generality of connoisseurs call it very fine.

I have passed over the most part of the paintings at the Vatican. Though not very numerous, they are all very fine, with not more than one or two exceptions. But I know how tiresome all descriptions of all paintings are, and how often these have been described; and, therefore, I abstain even from recollecting them.

I could wish they were in better lighted rooms, and should not be sorry that they had frames; but chiefly I wish that the whole tribe of copyists, with

all their lumber, was kicked out. Both here, and in the Camere of Raphael, their huge pictures and scaffolds block up one's view of the originals. Copying is an unfailing trade at Rome. Numbers live upon Raphael alone; and it is amazing how well these gentlemen often seem to be satisfied with their own works. "*Non é cattiva,*" (which, in Italian acceptation, means very good indeed,) observed one, after comparing his own daub with the Transfiguration. Another subscribed to the compliment of a judicious friend, that his copy from one of the frescos, was *tale quale* with the original. And yet it was an artist of rather more fame, who, in former times, after repeated attempts to copy one head from the School of Athens, threw away his pencil in despair, declaring it was impossible!

I am now, once more, at the very entrance of the noble galleries and halls, which form the Vatican Museum of Sculpture—and yet I must not enter it. 'Tis true, I have given you only a hasty and imperfect sketch of my first visit to the place where I have spent so many delightful hours, or rather days; but to describe it at all, I must write volumes, and I therefore forbear. Nor will I say any thing of our visit to it by torch-light, except that the masterpieces of sculpture, in general, certainly appeared to far greater advantage, and the inferior ones to less. You cannot be said to see the Torso at all, if you only view it by day-light. Much depends upon the manner in which the torch is held. In some lights, even the Laocoon looked ill, though in the proper situation, it was beyond

expression fine. The Apollo requires to have the torch held behind it.

Nobody ever goes to see the Museum of the Capitol by torch-light, though every body makes a point of visiting the Vatican; and yet, I dare say, the Dying Gladiator would have as fine an effect, tried by this test of sculpture, as the Apollo and the Laocoon. But I believe I have never given you any account of the noble Museum of the Capitol at all. I will, therefore, do it in my next letter. Few cities can boast even of one fine museum of sculpture; but Rome has three,—the Vatican, the Capitol, and the Villa Albani.

LETTER LVIII.

MUSEUM OF THE CAPITOL.

A succession of profound critics, among whom is the celebrated Winkelman, have written most voluminously on the Museum of the Capitol. But this very redundancy of description annuls itself. Few will explore nine or ten folio volumes, but all must wish for some account of one of the finest collections of ancient sculpture in the world. There is, however, no medium between a little dry two-penny catalogue, and these ponderous tomes; and, though far be from me the presumptuous thought of supplying the deficiency, I will, as I hastily lead you through the noble halls and galleries of the Capitol, point out, on the way, a few of the most remarkable of its varied works of ancient art and genius.

You enter the court, and discover, in the opposite recess, the figure of Ocean, reclining, not upon his own vast plains of water, but upon a little bubbling fountain. This briny God was the ancient

respondent of Pasquin, and, if report says true, infused much attic salt into his pleasant replies. According to some authorities, he is the Rhine; but, be this as it may, this hoary father of the flood is universally called Marforio, from having been found in the Via Marforio, the name of which has probably been corrupted from the ancient Forum of Mars. Near it, are two satyrs, as Cariatydes; three consular fasces, (on the left wall) and two Pagan sarcophagi, found in the catacombs, (that receptacle only of Christian martyrs) on one of which is inscribed the portrait and the name of the Pagan Roman, whose remains it contained. The Genius of Plenty, with the horn at his feet; marine monsters; the chace of the wild boar and the stag; and such heathen devices, adorn these urns.

On the centre of the portico of the court, two long, lank, colossal, and truly Egyptian figures, of Isis, stare you in the face. One, of basalt, has *the modium* on its head, which is covered with hieroglyphics, as well as its shapeless back. The other, which is of red granite, has the lotus flower on its brow, and three figures of the Ibis, the sacred bird of the Nile, on its back.

The best statue I saw in this portico, was Diana looking after the arrow she had just thrown. The spirit and attitude of the figure are very fine. It expresses all the life and freedom of the huntress of the woods. The drapery, blown by the wind, displays, to great advantage, the beautiful buskined leg. Diana's petticoats, I must beg to observe, are

always tucked up; so that, you see, the Scotch fashion of the women kilting, is quite classical.

At the extremity of this little portico, is a pedestal, on which is sculptured, in relievo, the bound and captive province of Dacia, known by the axe she bears. Beside it, stands a fine fragment, in pavonazetto marble, of one of the statues of the captive Dacian kings, that once adorned Trajan's Arch of Triumph. It was removed by Constantine to his own, and from thence, by one of the Popes, here. The full trowsers of those captive kings, are exactly the Turkish dress of the present day—so long do modes continue. There is also a still finer fragment—the leg of a Hercules trampling upon the hydra. The rude sculpture of the Wolf and the Twins, found at Albano, seems to prove its high antiquity, although we can scarcely admit its claims to have adorned Alba Longa. Adrian, as Pontifex Maximus, is sacrificing, with the head uncovered—so that it must have been to Saturn, for to every other deity the priest was veiled.

The restorers have made fine work here. You will see Polyphemus, notwithstanding his extra eye over his nose, transformed into Pan—Muses and Geniuses, which have become celestial since their mutilation—one figure, by the help of a cornucopia, transformed into Plenty, and another dubbed an Immortality.

A Roman warrior in complete armour and a long beard, is called Pyrrhus, who, as well as all

the ancient Grecians, it is well known, used to shave himself. Winkelman, having assigned this reason why it cannot be Pyrrhus, very consistently discovers that it is Agamemnon.* This colossal statue is, however, extremely interesting, from the minute details of the martial accoutrements it bears. The weight of the lorica, compressing the thick folds of the tunic, looks as if the man incased in it could never have moved, much less fought. It reminds one of the heavy coat of mail described by Virgil, that two servants could scarcely hold, though, under it, the fleet Grecian did such execution—

"Levibus huic hamis consertam auroque trilicem,
Loricam,

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Vix illam famuli, Phegeus, Sagarisque, ferebant
Multiplicem, connixi humeris: indutus at olim
Demoleos cursu palantis Troas agebat."

Æn. v. 264.

A whole room is filled with Egyptian sculpture, brought from the Egyptian Temple, or Canopus, of Adrian's Villa. Canopus himself, the Egyptian Neptune,† has the lotus flower on his little head—and is of black basalt.

* Hist. de l'Art. liv. vii. chap. 4. § 19.

† Canopus, which is the name of one of the mouths of the Nile, was, in fact, nothing but the vase, in which its waters, at the annual inundation, were carried in the religious rites. But, from the propensity of the Egyptians to deify every thing, it was worshipped as a god of great importance, and had a beautiful little human face, which surmounted the vase.

In this room, all the sculptures in basalt are ancient Egyptian. The rest, in nero antico marble, which look, from their beauty and dazzling polish, as if fresh from the artist's hand, are of the age of Hadrian. Of the latter class, are the beautiful conjoined heads of the Sun and Moon, or Osiris and Isis. Osiris is under the form of Apis; and both are exquisitely finished. Here is an Isis, with a wig of peacock's feathers, and the modium. Anubis, the Egyptian Mercury, with his canine head, is the only deity in white marble. He bears both the sistrum and the caduceus, and is also of Hadrian's age. Certainly these works are greatly relieved from the straight, stretched out, perpendicular rigidity, of the true Egyptian sculpture. That people seemed to have much resemblance to the Chinese in their works, and much of their stationary and unprogressive character. They made no advances in art; and, indeed, where anatomy was a subject of religious mystery, and an incision made into a dead body accounted worse than murder—excellence in the representation of the human form was manifestly unattainable.* It always seem-

* Vide Winkelman, Histoire de l'Art. liv. ii. chap i. § 9, who quotes Diod. Siculus, l. i. § 91. The embalming of the dead among the Egyptians, was intrusted to one family, and transmitted from father to son. It is related, that these operators, after having finished their work, were generally obliged to run away, from the childish rage of the relations at the necessary incisions that had been made for this purpose in the corpse of the deceased.

ed to be their aim, to make men as much as possible like mummies. Their images—for I cannot call them statues—had never any principle of life, far less did they bear any approach to freedom, or grace, or expression, or momentary action. Their stiff, upright figures, their long baboon arms, hanging close to their sides, their large flat feet, their mute insensible faces, their unformed limbs, destitute of all articulation of joints and muscles, remind one, rather of the first rude attempts at sculpture, than of its finished state.

The Egyptians might give the art of sculpture to the Greeks, but theirs was only the lifeless figure of clay. It was the Greeks who brought the Promethean spark that gave it life.

Beyond the Egyptian room, is a chamber filled with inscriptions, embracing the whole period of the Roman empire, from Augustus to Theodosius. Here stands the Columna Milliarium, an ancient Roman marble mile-stone, with two inscriptions, one in Latin, the other in Greek. A pedestal, of the finest style of Greek sculpture, represents the labours of Hercules; and, on a sepulchral cippus, and also on a column, I observed all the ancient instruments used in architecture, and in mensuration—the trowel, the hammer, the compasses, the plummet, and the quadrant, &c. exactly such as we use at the present day.

The last room contains the great marble sarcophagus, in which was found the Barberini Vase.*

* Now in the British Museum, and called the Portland vase, from the name of its late possessor.

From two figures, of bad sculpture, at the top, it has been called, the tomb of Alexander Severus, and Mammea, his mother. But Winkelman observes, that is impossible, because the man represented here is at least fifty, and Alexander Severus was murdered before he was thirty. It is more reasonably supposed to be the tomb of both his parents. The bassi rilievi, on the four sides, are of varying degrees of excellence. The front, which is very fine, represents the contest between Achilles and Agamemnon for Briseis. The trembling maid, the assembled Greeks, the noble figures, the contending passions expressed by their action, and, above all, the transport of Achilles, whose uplifted arm is withheld by Minerva, are admirably given.

On the side next the window, the fair captive is taking leave of her father. The sculptor has aimed at giving even a stronger interest to this parting scene than the poet,—in whose hands she is a mere tool,—by making her turn back, with an expression of longing regret, towards her departing lover, whose horse is held by his attendants.

The third side, which represents the Greeks supplicating Achilles to revenge the death of Patroclus, is of very inferior sculpture; and the fourth—the principal actions of Achilles—is the work of a barbarous age.

In this apartment there is a very curious inscription in the Palmyrean language, the only one I ever met with—many of the letters are unknown.

While my companions were admiring an ancien

mosaic, representing Love conquering Force, or little Loves mounted on the subdued Lion, I was much amused with a curious basso rilievo of one of the Galli, Cybele's vagabond priests, (apparently the high priest) in full costume, and surrounded with all the symbols of her worship.

On the staircase, are the twenty-six fragments of the ancient plan of Rome. Half way up, is one of those numerous statues, generally called Modesty—the head veiled, and the figure enveloped, but not concealed, in the thin, transparent, clinging drapery. They used to go by the name of vestals, and are now supposed, like all veiled statues, to be sepulchral figures.

In the gallery, you will stop to admire the striking, but disgusting, figure of an old, drunken, screaming Bacchante, grasping with both hands a skin of wine—the deep despair of the abandoned Psyche,—one of the finest of the daughters of Niobe —the torso of a Discobolus, restored as a falling Gladiator—the head of Jupiter Ammon,—the sarcophagus, with the bas relief of the Rape of Proserpine,—but more particularly, the infant Hercules strangling, without an effort, the serpents—which has always seemed to me a beautiful allegory of Innocence destroying Evil.

Here we have the bust of Brutus, and of Pompey, though the nose of the latter is somewhat apocryphal *—of Cato the Censor, though we

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*. I mean compared with the medal, the impression of which may be seen in Maffio Racc. di Stat. tav. 127. Neither

have not even tradition to help us to his physiognomy—of Scipio Africanus, of whom I have seen at least six heads, differing from each other in every thing but ugliness*—and of many more of the famous heroes of the Republic, which nothing could prevent us from contemplating with the deepest interest, except the conviction that they are all impostors.† But the fine colossal bust of Marcus Agrippa is both beautiful and authentic. Here, too, is a bust you would, perhaps, hardly expect to see—that of Cecrops, King of Athens!

I observed a sarcophagus, the sides of which are sculptured with the education of Bacchus, and his first adoration, after having planted the vine; and in the centre, a most curious representation of a sport celebrated in his honour, in which a party of men are jumping upon a skin, swelled out with wine, and well oiled; while old Silenus is laughing at an unlucky wight who is sprawling on the ground.

On a votive altar, of vile sculpture, which now serves for a pedestal to a statue of Jove, you see the Vestal Claudia, drawing after her the vessel containing the simulacrum of Cybele.

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does it bear the smallest resemblance to the statue at the Palazzo Spada.

* Every head with a scar upon it, however dissimilar, is invariably called that of the great Scipio.

† Once for all, I must notice the mortifying truth, that, with scarce an exception, there is no authority for any head of Republican date. Pompey,—and even his is dubious,—as far as I remember, is the sole.

Two rooms, on the right of the gallery, contain a most entertaining variety of inscriptions, marbles, bronzes, vases, &c. &c. Of these, I shall mention very few, but I cannot altogether pass over a beautiful bronze vase, found in the sea at Antium, which, as the inscription upon it proves, was given by Mithridates, King of Pontus, to the Gymnasium there. There is also a noble Greek marble vase, which gives to the room its title of Stanza del Vaso, encircled with its sculptured foliage of vines, which was found among the ruined tombs of the Via Appia—as if the spirits of the ancient Romans had been quaffing nectar from its brim. Its pedestal is sculptured with the twelve great gods.*

The famous Iliac table is here. A jovial priest, who was out hunting, found it on the Appian Way, at a place called *Alle Frattochie*, where, it is believed, the Emperor Claudius had a villa, and that this remarkable bas relief was a work of his reign.† It is only a small square slab of marble, though it

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* Viz. Jupiter with his thunderbolt, Vulcan with his hammer, Neptune with his trident, Mercury with his caduceus, Cybele with the pine cones, Venus with her beauty, Mars with his spear and shield, Diana with her bow, Apollo with his lyre, Hercules with his club, Minerva, armed with her ægis and helmet, and Juno, crowned with her diadem. Vesta often appears instead of Cybele—in fact, they differed in little more than name.

† Winkelman, Hist. de l'Art. lib. iv. chap. 2. The engraving and full explanation will be found by Foggini, Mus. Capit. l. iv. t. 1. 68.

has made so much noise in the world; and upon it are sculptured the principal actions of the Iliad, with an explanatory inscription in Greek, which, has been so often translated and commented upon, that it is not necessary for me to say any thing about it; a circumstance that is peculiarly fortunate, as I do not understand it.

Diana Triformis, is a small bronze sculpture, as light and portable looking as a child's plaything; the three figures joined together, back to back, in the form of a small triangle. This goddess certainly forms the Pagan trinity. She is three in one—here she appears in hell, on earth, and in heaven, at once—As Proserpine, crowned with the six rays of the planets, a serpent in her hand—as Hecate, her brows bound with laurel, holding a key—as Diana Lucifera, a lotus flower on her forehead, and bearing a torch. In all these varied characters—in the chaste huntress, and in the motionless Ephesian idol, incased like a mummy in mystic symbols, who can recognize the same goddess?

Here is a bronze foot of the colossal statue of Caius Cestius; a bronze inscription of Sep. Severus and Caracalla, (the name of Geta erased,) a triumph of Bacchus, columns, busts, bassi rilievi, cinerary urns, minute images in bronze and alabaster of gods and goddesses; ancient tripods, and candelabras, and a hundred little interesting antiques, will catch your eye.

I noticed a stadera, with its weight, exactly like our steelyard, which I had no notion was so classical a thing.

In the wall of this room, is the famous Furietti Mosaic, found by the Cardinal of that name at Hadrian's Villa, representing four doves, perched on the brim of a large vase, or basin, filled with water, one of which is drinking from it. Simple as the subject is, the taste of the design is most beautiful. It answers so exactly to Pliny's description of the famous mosaic of Sosus in the temple at Pergamus, that if not the original, which I confess I do not believe, it must at least be considered a copy. Winkelman* denies its originality, from the difficulty of transportation, a reason we can scarcely hold valid; but his commentator observes very justly, that as Hadrian was remarkable for his careful preservation of ancient works of art, encouraged their imitation, and emulated their perfection, but never carried them off from their proper possessors and situations, (unlike our modern patrons of the arts,) it is much more probable that he caused the beautiful Mosaic of Sosus to be copied by the best artists of his own time, than that he tore it up from the Temple of Pergamus, to embellish his own palace.

There is a sarcophagus in this room, adorned with a bas relief of wretched sculpture, perhaps of the fourth or fifth century, but a very curious subject, which represents the whole Promethean creation of man. First, we see Prometheus moulding

* Winkelman, Hist. de l'Art. liv. vi. chap. 7.

the figure out of clay, while Minerva is infusing into the lifeless mass, the spirit, in the form of a butterfly. Cupid and Psyche embracing each other, also represent the union of the body and the soul. The four elements, necessary to the life of man, surround them, and are figured by Æolus blowing his airy horn—Ocean, with the monsters of his watery reign —Vulcan at his fiery forge, and the "Common Mother," raising her breast above the ground, with a cornucopia in her hand. Man then appears, endowed with life; and the three implacable Fates, who attend him from the cradle to the tomb, start up by his side. He is laid low in death. The Genius of Life, weeping over his corpse, extinguishes his torch. The soul, bursting upwards on its butterfly wings, is conducted to heaven by Mercury. Lastly, we behold Prometheus suffering the gnawing anguish of remorse, or the vulture preying on his vitals. It is destroyed by Hercules. Will it be deemed profane to find in this a type of our Saviour's conquest over the penalty of sin?

There is a whole room filled with the busts of the Emperors and their families, nearly complete. Even Commodus, notwithstanding the decree to destroy every image of him, is here; and the unfortunate Geta, in spite of the labours of his brother and murderer, to erase even his name from the earth, still stands by his side, as if haunting him in death. The contrast between Nero young, and Nero in more advanced life, will strike you forcibly; the beauty of the innocent face of Annius Verus, will charm you; and the hideous head

of Julian the Apostate, will puzzle you to determine whether the sculpture or the subject is the worst.

You will never be satiated with admiring the noble statue of Agrippina, the virtuous wife of Germanicus, seated in the midst of the room, like an ancient Roman matron, commanding respect from her native dignity of carriage.

The bassi rilievi on the walls, of Perseus liberating Andromeda, and Endymion sleeping, are full of grace and beauty.

The bassi rilievi in the next room, (the Stanza de' Filosofi,) from their subjects, rather than their execution, afforded me great entertainment. Among them are, a woman teaching a cat to dance, while she plays upon the lyre to it; poor Grimalkin trying all the time vainly to reach two birds suspended over its head—Calliope teaching Orpheus to play upon the lyre, before the image of a man, whom the strains seem to animate with life—Esculapius and Hygeia, laying their heads together; and, in the next, the consequences not uncommon of such consultations,—a funeral procession. There are many more; but I was particularly struck with the tragedy of the death of Meleager. The uncles, pierced with their death wounds,—his infuriated mother burning the fatal brand, to which the life of her son is attached,—his fainting form falling on the couch, and his beloved Atalanta vainly weeping over him,—altogether form a subject of the highest interest, but which is, perhaps, better

adapted to painting than to sculpture; though no modern painter could do it justice.

In the middle of the room is placed an exquisitely beautiful little bronze statue of a youth, seated in a meditative posture,—a model of juvenile beauty. It is supposed to represent one of the twelve Camilli.*

As to the philosophers, some of the most interesting, such as Virgil, and Cicero, and Seneca, are purely supposititious. There is not a head of any poet or philosopher of the Augustan age, that we know to be genuine. The authenticity of some of the Greeks is ascertained, either from having been found with the ancient inscriptions of their names upon them, or from being prototypes of others so authenticated. The Homers, for there are several, are the very heads your fancy would pourtray for the old blind Bard, the Father of Poetry. I understand they were identified with the Apotheosis of Homer, formerly in the Colonna Palace; and if (which is probable) no bust was really taken of him in life, this seems, at least, to have been the head current among the ancients, as Homer; just as the posthumous picture of Shakepeare passes among us. Aristides is known from the incomparable statue at Naples. Socrates can never be mistaken. Metradorus, Epicurus, Pindar, Anacreon, and some others, are also ascertain-

* Priests instituted by Romulus.

ed. Sappho had a good right to be here; but how Cleopatra* got amongst these Grecian sages, we cannot guess. Her neighbour, Aspasia, was too much in their company, when alive, to be turned out of it now. The Platos are all recognized to be heads of barbarians, notwithstanding their philosophic name inscribed below. The last of these busts, that of Faerno, an architect of Cremona, is one of the (now) rare works of Michael Angelo. I dare not tell you, that I think I have seen busts as fine, by less celebrated hands, and therefore I will say nothing of it.

In the great Hall, one is struck with the modesty of Clement XII., in having taken two Victories from the Triumphal Arch of Marcus Aurelius, to support his coat of arms! It must, indeed, be acknowledged, that the Popes want no trumpeter. Every little thing they make or mend, be it a wooden door, or a leaden cistern, or a few stone steps, or a little bit of brick wall, is marked with their *munificenza!* These multiplied *munificenza's* of every Pope, as far as large gilt letters can prove it, stare you in the face in Rome, on all sides, wherever you go.

By their *munificenza*—two columns of giallo antico, from the neighbourhood of the tomb of Cecilia Metella, support the principal niche. But

* I need scarcely observe, there is no authority for the name this bust and many of the others bear.

the sculptures, in the middle of the room, first attract the eye. Jupiter, in nero antico marble, is, after all, but poor—and, indeed, I have never any where seen a fine statue of the great thunderer—Esculapius is no better The young Hercules (veiled) in pietra paragone,* found on the Aventine, looks fat and puffy, rather than strong; but the famous Furietti Centaurs, I admire extremely; indeed more, I suppose, than I ought; for Winkelman, (and, of course, all the critics echo him,) gives them small praise, though he does not mention in which way they displease him, and only observes, that they have anciently borne children on their backs, which is evident from the holes. The oldest, who bears the pedum in his hand, is thought to be Chiron carrying Achilles on his back, to instruct him in horsemanship and the chace. He looks back at the infant hero, with a joyous and triumphant air. The other is dejected, and apparently vanquished; his hands are bound behind his back. I was much charmed with the life and spirit, the action, the freedom, and the grace, of these two beautiful Centaurs. They are in dark grey marble, were found in Hadrian's villa, and are inscribed with the names of two Greek artists, supposed to be of his own time.

A fine, but unknown consular statue, is foolishly called Marius, though, from his countenance,

* Commonly called touch-stone.

his air, and his action, it is obvious that he is an orator and a philosopher; and the rude unlettered soldier was neither. Some critics call it a sepulchral figure.

The Amazons are fine. The drapery of the Grecian statue of Isis, knotted on the breast, and falling in graceful folds to the feet, is singularly beautiful. She wears the fringed peplum, or mantle, to denote her eastern extraction—the Grecians always wore it plain. All the statues of this goddess, in white marble, are of the time of the Empire, after her worship was adopted in Rome, and are, for the most part, the work of Greek artists; but this is by far the finest.

The ancient bronze, and once gilded Hercules, found in or near the Forum Boarium, with his head too small for his body, looks rather awkward and ungainly.

The old shrivelled crying crone—whether she be a Præfica,* a Hecuba, or any of the other innumerable descriptions of ugly old women, it is possible she may be—is certainly good of the kind, that is, well executed, though a disagreeable subject. I must pass by Antoninus Pius, with the civic crown he deserved so well; the Altar of Fortune, on which that goddess, who is now as ever the object of men's

* This is not probable, because these hired mourners had their hair streaming "to the troubled air," and this old woman has hers bound up.

worship—is represented, seated on her throne, crowned with her diadem, holding in her left hand the cornucopia, and in her right the rudder, with which she turns the world. I must pass by the pedestal, on which the birth and concealment of Jove, the stupidity of old Saturn, in swallowing a stone instead of his son—the din raised by the Corybantes to stifle his cries—the care taken to suckle him by his four-footed nurse Amalthea; and, finally, his exaltation to the throne of heaven, are all very minutely represented—I must pass by many things—but I must stop for one moment, at the finest statue in this room, and one which has never received its due share of encomium. It is the fine figure of a man speaking, with drapery round the lower part of the body only, in an easy graceful attitude, one foot resting on a raised stone, or step, and his finger held up as if to enforce attention. It is called a professor of the gymnastic art, or the master of an academy of gladiators, instructing his disciples. It is an admirable statue, and unique; but Harpocrates, that little mysterious god, with his brimming cornucopia in his hand, his brow adorned with the lotus flower, and his expressive finger pressed upon his lip, enjoins me silence. Plainer than words can speak, his gesture tells me how fat and flourishing he has grown by holding his tongue. I dare say you wish I would follow his example; but few of my sex ever did, and I shall go on to talk of the room where the jocund faun, (in rosso antico,) eying the tempting bunch of grapes, which he holds suspended in

his hand, and surrounded with his goat, his pedum, and his basket, looks the happiest of created beings. But notwithstanding the symmetry of his finely formed limbs, you will soon turn from him to one of the finest statues in the world—Cupid bending his bow. Its unrivalled grace, its faultless perfection, and its truly celestial beauty of form, are, indeed, a triumph of art. The Apollo Belvidere, and a few other great statues excepted, I am disposed to think this one of the finest exemplifications of the beau ideal in existence. It is an ancient copy from the famous masterpiece of Praxiteles, of Cupid bending his bow, which was destroyed in the age of Titus. I have seen one copy in England, and there is another in the Villa Albani; but this is incomparably the finest. It is one of the few statues that I can return to gaze at, day after day, with still increasing delight and admiration. I am no connoisseur—but few, very few, I believe, receive more pleasure from works of art, whether in painting or sculpture, when of first-rate excellence.

Innocence, a smiling girl, with a dove—a child playing with a mask; and, more especially, an urchin struggling with a goose, are truly beautiful, particularly the playful sweetness of the first.

One of the finest bassi rilievi in the world—the battle of the Amazons—is on a sarcophagus in this room. No praise is adequate to its merits. Another, opposite, has great beauty and interest, though the sculpture is very inferior. The subject is the nocturnal visit of Diana to the sleeping En-

dymion. The goddess descends from her car, led by the Loves—a winged Genius restrains the fiery steeds. At the other end, by a liberty common in basso rilievo, she mounts it again to depart, casting back her looks of love on the unconscious shepherd, over whose drooping form, moth-winged slumber still hovers. The earth, personified in a female form, whose bust is raised above the ground, beneath her wheels; and a man tending Endymion's flock, complete the composition.

There is a very amusing bas relief here of the Triumph of Cupid over the Gods. It seems to have formed a part of a freize, and is left imperfect; but we see, first, a car drawn by rams, in which this roguish god is carrying off the spoils of Mercury; then follow, in a car drawn by stags, those of the chaste Diana herself; in a car, drawn by tygers, those of Bacchus; and in another, drawn by hippogriffs, those of Apollo.

I must not quit this room, without mentioning a more recondite, though less amusing, piece of antiquity—the table of bronze, on which is inscribed the "royal law," found near St John Lateran's, in which the Roman Senate decree to Vespasian supreme power.

You now enter the last room, in which you will, for a long time, see nothing but the Dying Gladiator. It is, of its kind, the finest statue in the world. The learned connoisseur, and the untaught peasants, whom you may see assembled round it on Sundays, are equally struck with its faultless perfection. It is one of the finest of forms, as far

as mere corporeal formation can go; but, unlike most of the celebrated works of ancient art, there is no ideal beauty, no expression of those high qualities and attributes, that spring from the soul. It is Nature, pure Nature, that arrests so forcibly our deepest sympathy. It is not a god nor a hero, but a man—and a man of servile condition and unelevated mind, that we behold. The whole expression of the head and figure prove it. The hands and the soles of the feet are hard and horny with labour, and a rope is knotted round the neck. He seems endeavouring to suppress the expression of agony; not a sigh, not a groan escapes him; unsubdued in spirit, it is his body, not his mind, that yields; but the hand of death is upon him; his life-blood trickles slowly and feebly from the wound in his side; he sinks in that last dreadful faintness of ebbing life, which all must sooner or later feel. He still supports himself with difficulty upon his failing arm, but his limbs have lost their force, his bristling hair and agonized face, express the dreadful workings of present suffering, and the inward conviction of approaching death. He is lying upon a shield; a short sword, or dagger, beside him, and a broken horn. The critics seem to agree that he cannot be a gladiator, for these were not their proper arms; and yet we know that the Secutores, in their combats with the Retiarii, fought with swords,—whether long or short seems uncertain,—and with shields—and why may they not have been such as these? The cord round the neck, and the horn perplex them; but it appears from an ancient Greek inscription, that the heralds

of the Olympic Games had a cord tied round their necks, and gave the signal for their commencement by blowing a horn; nay, this very inscription was affixed upon the statue of a herald, who was also a victor in these games;* so that the statue we now see may also combine both characters, and represent a herald and a wounded combatant. The mustachios, also, puzzle the antiquaries; without much reason, as it seems to me; for even if they necessarily prove that it was not a Greek, but a barbarian, we know that barbarian captives were often trained to these cruel sports. Some late critics have imagined that it represents a barbarian chief, but surely the cord round the throat is of itself a complete refutation of such an idea.

It will be objected, that, during the time of the great perfection of the arts, when this statue must have been produced, Greece had no gladiators; but call them by what name you will, we know that, even in the earliest times, hired combatants fought at the funeral games.

A celebrated statue of a wounded and dying man, the work of Ctesilaüs, a Grecian sculptor, who lived about the time of the Peloponnesian war, was much extolled among the ancients. But Winkelman thinks, *that*, must have been the statue of a hero, because he imagines that Ctesilaüs would not have descended to subjects of an inferior order—Pliny having observed, that his great forte lay in

* Winkleman, liv. vi. chap. 2. § 24.

giving his figures a noble air.* That is as much as if some sapient critic should assert, that, because Raphael's forte consisted in Madonnas and Holy Families, it was impossible he could have painted the Fornarina. The objection seems to me very futile; and, in point of fact, we know that ancient sculptors did not confine themselves to one class of subjects; besides, from the passage of Pliny,† it would appear that the famous masterpiece of Ctesilaüs was a wounded *man;* and had it been a hero, the name would most probably have been mentioned.

From all these circumstances, I am inclined to think it most probable, that this statue is either the original, or an ancient copy of the famous "wounded and dying man," of Ctesilaüs; and, judging from the horn by his side, and the cord round his neck, that it represents a herald and a combatant, in the Olympic, or, perhaps, in some funeral games.

But be it what it may, "the Dying Gladiator" will always be accounted one of the finest pieces of sculpture that time has spared. Statuary has, indeed, bequeathed few of its ancient treasures to us,

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* "Je *crois* que cette figure (that of Ctesilaüs) répresentoit un héros parce que *Je m' imagine*, que l'artiste n' auroit pas voulu descendre à traiter des sujets, d'un ordre inferieur attendu que son grand merite consistoit, suivant Pline, à donner encore plus de noblesse aux caractères nobles."—Vide WINKELMAN, l. vi. c. 2.

† Hist. l. xxxiv. c. 19. 4.

and we are vainly left to regret that only a few scattered "Fragments" of that heavenly art

> "Float down the tide of years,
> "As, buoyant on the stormy main,
> "A parted wreck appears." *

I must not trust myself to speak of the exquisitely beautiful groupe of Cupid and Pysche, which stands in this room. How will you be able to take your eye from such a work as that, to admire the fine, but far inferior statues which this room contains—the Flora, the Venus, the Juno, the beautiful Antinous in the heroic, so much admired by all—the Antinous as an Egyptian priest, so extolled by the critics, or the admirable ancient copy of the celebrated Faun of Praxiteles? The head of Alexander the Great has been set on awry with great care, by the restorers, in order to prove it to be his; notwithstanding which, it is the fashion now to doubt it. For my part, I fully believe it, because it bears a strong resemblance to the ancient gems of undoubted authenticity, and because his is a head that once seen can never be mistaken. We are told, that Apelles only had the right of painting it, Lysippus of casting it in bronze, and Pyrgotelus of engraving it in gems; but history is silent as to the name of its privileged sculptor in marble.†

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* Sir Walter Scott.

† Winkelman, Hist. de l'Art, liv. vi. chap. 3. who quotes Pliny in support of the fact.

In looking back on the contents of this Museum, I should say, that the finest works it contains, are the Osiris and Isis, the Furies, Centaurs, the Professor of the Gymnastic Art, the seated statue of Agrippina, and of the Camillus, the Child playing with a Goose, the Cupid bending his Bow, the Cupid and Psyche, and the Dying Gladiator.*

I must not forget the noble marble vase, and its pedestal; the Mosaic of the four Doves, the beauty of which was commemorated by Pliny; and the bas reliefs of the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles, the Nine Muses, and the Battle of the Amazons.

* I forgot to mention that this statue was admirably restored by Michael Angelo. A part of one foot and arm, one hand, and some other minuter morsels, are replaced in the true spirit of the original.

LETTER LIX.

THE PAINTINGS AND THE PALAZZO DE' CONSERVATORI IN THE CAPITOL—ACADEMY OF ST LUKE—RAPHAEL'S ST LUKE—RAPHAEL'S SKULL.

From the Museum of Sculpture, at the Capitol, we must now proceed to that of Painting, which is, however, of very inferior interest. It is contained in the opposite Palazzo de' Conservatori,* in which are also some remarkable antiquities. Crossing the Piazza by the Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius, we enter the court. All here reminds us of the grandeur of ancient Rome. Opposite to us sits Rome triumphant. At her feet weeps a captive Province. By her side stand two prisoner bar-

* The Conservatori, are officers appointed to keep the streets, roads, public buildings, &c., in proper repair and order. They seem, in some degree, to fulfil the office of the ancient Ædiles. They sometimes give great public feasts at the Capitol, to the cardinals and nobility, as if in imitation of those which were formerly offered up here to Jupiter and the gods, but really eaten by the priests and the senators.

barian kings; their mutilated hands bear dreadful proof of her own barbarism; for it is evident, on inspection, that they represent captives whose hands have been cut off.*

The court is strewed with fragments of colossal figures of gods and emperors, of the most enormous size. Cæsar and Augustus stand entire. At the bottom of the staircase, is placed the modern imitation of that ancient Rostral Column of Caius Duillius, in the Forum, that commemorated the first naval triumph Rome ever obtained. A portion of the ancient inscription, which was found in making an excavation, is fixed in it. The whole was done under the direction of Michael Angelo. While this reminds us of the early days of Republican glory, and the relievo of Curtius plunging into the gulf, recalls the great sacrifices of Roman patriotism,—the beautiful sculptures from the Triumphal Arch of Marcus Aurelius, commemorate

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* One of them has been cut off above the elbow, the other at the wrist. They are smooth and polished, and the drapery touches them so closely, that it is evident they were originally formed so. According to Winkelman, (lib. vi. chap. 5,) they represent Thracian kings, of a people called *Scordisci*, and in the note it is asserted, on the authority of Florus, that the Romans cut off the hands of all their Thracian prisoners, and sent them back into their own country, to strike its inhabitants with terror.

We shudder at such horrors; and while we see that the most civilized of Pagan states far surpassed in cruelty the most barbarous of Christian nations, we bless the Divine Spirit of that religion which has worked the change.

one of the proudest periods of her empire, and of those wide-extended conquests that subdued the world.

We observed two Egyptian idols, similar to those in the opposite court, and a remarkably fine animal groupe of Grecian sculpture—a lion springing on the back of a horse; its tusks closed in the back of the animal. Though now defective, it is said to have been restored by Michael Angelo, who admired it particularly. After ascending the staircase, we passed through two rooms, and in the third, which is adorned with a fine frieze, painted by Daniel di Volterra, representing the Triumph of Marius, we find the bronze statue of the Wolf and Twins, supposed to be the same which Cicero states to have been struck by lightning on the Capitol, previous to the murder of Julius Cæsar. This Wolf, however, (for the Twins are modern,) was found at the Church of St Theodore, in the Forum below. It has a fracture in the inside of the hind leg, but it seems to me almost impossible that the lightning should have struck it in such a part, and in no other. The beautiful bronze statue of Martius, the shepherd boy, pulling the thorn out of his foot, and the figure of one of the Camillii, are the only other sculptures in the room worth notice; unless you wish to see the pretended bust of the elder Brutus, the liberator of Rome, standing by that of Julius Cæsar, its enslaver.

The next room is almost entirely occupied with the Fasti Consulares—the succession of consuls,

found near the three columns of the Comitium, in the Forum.

The fifth chamber contains two ancient bronzes of the Sacred Geese, whose clamour awakened Manlius, and preserved Rome from the Gauls; which reminded us that Rome, on the same spot,* was betrayed by a woman, and saved by a goose.

The Medusa's Head, by Bernini, a piece of sculpture generally much admired, is here. The portrait of Michael Angelo, by himself, is extremely interesting, although some doubt has lately been thrown on its authenticity. There is a Holy Family, by Giulio Romano, said to be very fine; but the light is so bad, I have never yet been able to see it. There is—one of the many absurdities of Roman Museums—a bust, said to be of Appius Claudius (the blind,) in rosso antico—a material wholly unknown to the Romans in his simple republican age.

The frieze of the sixth chamber, is painted in fresco, by Annibale Caracci, with the achievements of Scipio; and the last chamber is painted in fresco, by Pietro Perugino, and adorned with two unknown statues, christened Cicero and Virgil.

In the little chapel beyond, a fresco of the Eternal Father, in the ceiling, by Annibale Caracci; and the Altar-piece, by Avanzino Nemi, are worth notice.

* The Tarpeian rock, which received its name from the treachery of Tarpeia.

The paintings in this palace, which fill three rooms, have been the most ill used collection that ever was made, and though really the works of some of the best masters, they present the most black, battered, and forlorn appearance, that can well be imagined. A little cleaning and varnish might do something for them, but many of them are irreparably injured. There are some, indeed, the destruction of which excites little regret. Amongst these may, perhaps, be reckoned the large and laboured productions of Pietro da Cortona, which abound here. The Triumph of Bacchus, is a pretty composition, rich, various and classical. His Rape of the Sabines, Death of Darius, &c., have also considerable merit. It is the fashion to cry him down so unmercifully, that nobody will even look at his works, and I must own, I never had any great pleasure in them myself, nor have I the smallest desire to vindicate him from the opprobrium he labours under so justly, of being the first corrupter of painting, the beginner of that rapid descent we have since made down the hill of taste. Still, I think he is too outrageously vilified; and I am sure that, however inferior he may be to the great masters who preceded him, Italy can produce no artist now to compare with him.

His productions have certainly some learning, but little taste or genius. We can point out no glaring faults in design or composition, but we feel the absence of that which constitutes perfection. He draws good figures, but they want expression. He breathes no interest, no soul, no charm of na-

ture, or ideal beauty, into them. His colouring wants truth, and his lights effect.

Let us turn from them to N. Poussin's Triumph of Flora, which, faded and injured as it is, is still a most beautiful composition. His Orpheus playing on the Lyre, surrounded by Nymphs and Loves, is extremely fine, yet it has some faults of execution which seldom occur in so careful a master.

Domenichino's Sybil, is a masterpiece of painting. Its rival, the Sybil of Guercino, has not the same high character of inspiration, in the beaming eye and the half sundered lip. She is at rest, unmoved by those stormy passions and that shuddering sense of coming evils, that are the curse of the prophetic spirit. But there is in her eye that settled sadness natural to one who can penetrate the darkness of futurity, and see all its crimes and sorrows. Like most of the others, this beautiful painting has been much injured.

Guido's Bacchus and Ariadne is unfinished, and it would, perhaps, have been quite as well for his fame if it had never been begun. His Beatified Spirit is far superior, yet still it seems to want something of celestial and glorified beauty, that, in his happier moments, he could have given it. His St Sebastian is fine, but inferior to that at the Colonna palace. A very clever gypsey, telling a silly youth his fortune, at the same time she is cheating him out of it, is one of Caravaggio's admirable productions. It is much injured, and not quite so good as a duplicate I have somewhere seen of it.

He ought never to have painted any but such subjects as these.

A fine portrait by Velasquez, a beautiful little Holy Family by Albano, the Flemish Fair by Brughel, (very clever and amusing) a landscape by Domenichino, (a pretty little composition) the Rape of Europa, by Paul Veronese,—nearly invisible from dirt and injury, but reminding me through it all, of his splendid Europa in the Doge's palace at Venice,—these, and several more, are well worth your attention; but I will spare you any farther enumeration of them.

I must, however, when here, carry you down into the Forum to the Academy of St. Luke. This society of sculptors, painters, architects, and engravers—of all, in short, who practice the arts of design, male and female,—possess for their Academy, two mean, unimposing looking apartments, behind the church of their patron saint. One of them is filled with models, designs, &c. some of which are by Michael Angelo; the other, by a collection of paintings, chiefly composed of the works of the modern Roman artists, and therefore not pre-eminent in their merit. The specimens of the great masters, which chiefly consist of a few little Claudes, Salvator Rosas, Poussins, &c. &c. are by no means first-rate.

Some of these, however, and some of the modern ones, such as the paintings of Angelica Kauffman, you may find pleasure in seeing, though none in hearing described. The famous picture in this Academy is Raphael's St Luke painting the Vir-

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gin's portrait.* In this admirable work, Raphael has realized his own conceptions of an artist. St Luke has all the fire, the glow, the inspiration, of commanding genius. It struck me with the most extraordinary admiration the first time I beheld it. I was then fresh from England, where, excepting the Cartoons, we have nothing worthy of the name of Raphael—I had seen none of the treasures of his genius which Rome contains, and I actually dreamt of this figure.

The skull of Raphael is preserved here, under a glass case!—I suppose this must be a transporting sight to Messrs Gall and Spurzheim, and all their disciples, but to me it was rather a shocking one. I had no pleasure in viewing the eyeless sockets, the grinning mouth, the mouldering vacant bones, that once beamed with intelligence and beauty—and hearing that this was Raphael.

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* Originally the altar-piece in the Church of St Luke.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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